THOSE NERVES

BY

GEORGE L. WALTON, M.D.

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MARCUS AURELIUS ANTONINUS

"A cucumber is bitter—throw it away. There are briars in the roadside—turn aside from them. This is enough. Do not add 'And why were such things made in the world?'"

THOSE NERVES

BY

GEORGE LINCOLN WALTON, M.D.

CONSULTING NEUROLOGIST
TO THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL;
AUTHOR OF "WHY WORRY?"

Glories, pleasures, pomps, delights and ease
Can but please
Outward senses when the mind
Is untroubled, or by peace refined.

JOHN FORD

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To
Those Who Need It

PREFACE

THE electrical display of a broken trolley-wire calls our attention to the fact that it is alive, in other words, that the motor is alive and that the wire is conducting. By a similar figure of speech we credit nerves with feeling. But the nerves, like the wires, are only conductors. It is the brain that feels. To be accurate, we should, perhaps, replace "those nerves" by "that brain."

Possibly those who credit even plants with intelligence may dispute this proposition. Fortunately its acceptance is not essential to the purpose of the book, which is in line with the present trend in favor of treating, or, preferably, of preventing, mental

disorders by mental methods. It is believed that certain subjects introduced in a previous publication will bear further elaboration, especially since long-standing faulty mental habits are not to be dissipated, or even materially modified, by the single effort, but, if at all, by the reiteration of useful maxims, by the repeated presentation of suggestive propositions, by the constant reestablishment of lapsed ideals, and by renewed endeavor to gain control of those rebellious "nerves."

GEORGE L. WALTON.

BOSTON, 1909.

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THOSE NERVES

I

INTRODUCTORY

'Tis easier to prevent bad habits than to break them.
B. Franklin.

THE object of this book is to promote such peace of mind as may make for health as well as for happiness. In other words, like vaccination, pure milk, and disinfection, it aims to prevent.

It is true that many persons, particularly among those who need to be prevented, resent being prevented from doing themselves harm. There are even those who cry out against vaccination, and intimate that it is a device of the physician to increase his

bank account at the expense of the public, a view which not only overlooks his altruistic motives, but deprecates his business sagacity. He could so easily vaccinate himself and friends and sit back to await developments. Fortunately for the safety of the community, the great majority feel and reason otherwise. Among that majority there may be those who are not averse to the (not altogether painless) inoculation of a few chapters on the faulty mental habits that invite collapse.

The gentle reader (or if, as a recent writer intimates, he has altogether disappeared, some other reader) may be disappointed that the subject is not developed in logical sequence from the anatomy of the nervous system to its morbid manifestations. But the obsession for *too great*

orderliness is one of these very manifestations.

A friendly critic has called my attention to the fact that in one chapter of "Why Worry" indifference to the bodily sensations is advocated, while another chapter sets forth the comfort of low shoes and thin underwear. This time I propose not to wait until I am discovered, but to announce at the outset that nothing material will be sacrificed to consistency.

A simple study in domestic economy will illustrate this position. Let us suppose that some one of our friends has the physique and the willingness to earn, by the sweat of his brow, one thousand dollars per year. Let us suppose, further, that, lacking the intellectual acumen to master any of the easily accessible plans for bringing up a family on a few dollars

a week, his expenses for the past year amount to one thousand and one dollars. The desideratum would seem to be that next year he spend at least two dollars less. He casts about, therefore, among the dispensibles of life and decides to forego beer, and thus places himself on Easy Street. Now appears our other friend, the Doctrinaire:

"What's the logic," he inquires, "of giving up beer, while you are still using tobacco," and adds with unction, "Consistency, thou art a jewel."

Who can blame our industrious friend if he ruminate somewhat as follows:

"What has consistency to do with it so I save my two dollars?"

II

EPICTETUS ON CONTROL

That halting slave, who in Nicopolis
Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son,
Cleared Rome of what most shamed him.

Matthew Arnold.

It was fitting that the Stoic philosophy should have been embraced by one who passed in turn from slavery to freedom, and from residence at Rome to exile in Epirus. It was appropriate, too, that this school should have flourished during a period when the Roman Empire itself was passing through the extremes of government which enabled historians to group certain of its rulers as "bad," while others earned the title "good."

Born in slavery, during the reign of Nero, Epictetus early cultivated

the philosophy of which he became in time one of the leading exponents, and which enabled him to maintain his mental equipoise through varied fortunes and under the handicap of lasting lameness. While yet in bondage he attended the lectures of Musonius Rufus, the Stoic, whom he often quoted. His period extended to the time of Hadrian, including, therefore, the tyrannical reign of Domitian, who banished the philosophers of the Stoic school on account of their lack of sympathy with his methods. The remainder of his life Epictetus spent at Nicopolis in Epirus, where he continued his work, indifferent in practice as in theory to unfavoring circumstance.

For the subtleties of logic and for the charms of rhetoric Epictetus had little use, devoting himself rather to

teaching, by precept and example, how to live. He exalted the will, the one possession of which he deemed man truly master. No circumstance, he maintained, can unfavorably affect or shake the calm of one who wills that inevitable things be as they are, and whatever else may be taken away, in this possession we are secure. This is the fundamental principle of Epictetus's teachings, the following extracts from which are taken from the translation by Thomas W. Higginson.

To the human sensitive-plant he says:

"Do not be hard to please, and squeamish at what happens. 'Vinegar is disagreeable, for it is sour. Honey is disagreeable, for it disorders my constitution. I do not like vegetables.' 'So I do not like retire-

ment, it is a desert; I do not like a crowd, it is a tumult.' "

In advising one who is sensitive to unfavorable comment he says: "If any one tells you that such a person speaks ill of you, do not make excuses about what is said of you, but answer: 'He was ignorant of my other faults, else he would not have mentioned these alone.' "

In the direction of controlling aversions, whether for things or for persons, no bit of philosophy can be more pertinent than the following:

"Cease to make yourselves slaves first of things, and then, upon their account, of men who have the power either to bestow or to take them away. Is there any advantage, then, to be gained from this man? From all; even a reviler. What advantage does a wrestler gain from him with whom

he exercises himself before the combat? The greatest. And just in the same manner I exercise myself with this man—and the heavier he is the better for me; and yet it is no advantage to me when I am exercised in gentleness of temper. This is not to know how to gain an advantage from men."

On the subject of control under minor annoyances, he says:

"When you set about any action, remind yourself of what nature the action is. If you are going to bathe, represent to yourself the incidents usual in the bath—some persons pouring out, others pushing in, others scolding, others pilfering. And thus you will more safely go about this action, if you say to yourself, 'I will now go to bathe, and keep my own will in harmony with nature.' And

so with regard to every other action. For thus, if any impediment arises in bathing, you will be able to say, 'It was not only to bathe that I desired, but to keep my will in harmony with nature; and I shall not keep it thus, if I am out of humor at things that happen.' "

The same admonition he applies to the more serious misfortunes, thus:

"With regard to whatever objects either delight the mind, or contribute to use, or are tenderly beloved, remind yourself of what nature they are, beginning with the merest trifles; if you have a favorite cup, that it is but a cup of which you are fond,—for thus, if it is broken, you can bear it; if you embrace your child, or your wife, that you embrace a mortal,—and thus, if either of them dies, you can bear it."

In the discussion of exaggerated fears Epictetus shows a glimpse of humor:

"In a voyage, for instance, casting my eyes down upon the ocean below and looking round me, and seeing no land, I am beside myself, and imagine that, if I should be shipwrecked, I must swallow all that ocean; nor does it occur to me, that three pints are enough for me. What is it, then, that alarms me,—the ocean? No; but my own impressions. Again, in an earthquake, I imagine the city is going to fall upon me; but is not one little stone enough to knock my brains out? What is it, then, that oppresses and makes us beside ourselves? Why, what else but our own impressions?"

Epictetus recognizes at least one of the faulty mental habits which we shall consider under Obsession,

namely, the obsession to carry through at all costs what one has undertaken. Thus, he discusses the attitude of an acquaintance, who, for no reason, has determined to starve himself to death:

"I went the third day, and inquired what was the matter. He answered, 'I am determined.' 'Well; but what is your motive? For if your determination be right, we will stay and assist your departure; but, if unreasonable, change it.' 'We ought to keep our determinations'—— 'What do you mean, sir? Not to all of them. Why do you not begin by first laying the foundation, inquiring whether your determination be a sound one or not, and then build your firmness and constancy upon it? For if you lay a rotten and crazy foundation, you must not build; since the greater and

more weighty the superstructure, the sooner will it fall. Suppose, by any means, it should ever come into your head to kill me; must you keep such a determination?' "

Again, "May it never fall to my lot to have a wise, that is, an untractable, fool for my friend. 'It is all to no purpose; I am determined.' So are madmen too; but the more strongly they are determined upon absurdities, the more have they need of hellebore."

Under the obsession for postponement of happiness he cites the slave who wishes to be set free:

" 'If I am once set free,' he says, 'it is all prosperity; I care for no one; I can speak to all as being their equal and on a level with them. I go where I will, I come when and how I will.' But after obtaining his free-

dom he comments upon his slavery as follows: 'For what harm did it do me? Another clothed me, another shod me, another fed me, another took care of me when I was sick. It was but in a few things, by way of return, I used to serve him. But now, miserable wretch! what do I suffer, in being a slave to many, instead of one! Yet, if I can be promoted to equestrian rank, I shall live in the utmost prosperity and happiness.' In order to do this, he first deservedly suffers; and as soon as he has obtained it, it is all the same again. 'But then,' he says, 'if I do but get a military command, I shall be delivered from all my troubles.' ''

In advocating reconciliation with the inevitable Epictetus does not imply that selfish comfort is the chief end of man. He teaches rather that

the individual can further his own interests only by doing his duty as a citizen. Whoever wishes, then, to acquire the art of combining action with peace of mind, may study, without fear of replacing accomplishment by repose, or of substituting egotism for altruism, the tenets of this philosopher.

III

ASSOCIATIVE MEMORIES

Our decision as to the probable qualities of a horse is made up of memories of the qualities of horses having similar points; we decide as to the healthiness of a house by memories of the salubrity of other houses similarly situated; and as to the prudence of a line of conduct, by memories of the consequences of other lines of conduct previously pursued.

MERCIER: *Sanity and Insanity.*

IN the self-training of the "nervous," the "hypped," the chronic doubter, and the constitutional coward the aim is to modify the mental attitude. This involves the rearrangement of existing thought-groups and the establishment of new ones of healthier tone.

Practical suggestions for such training are embodied in the following chapters, to which the reader may

proceed at once without prick of conscience lest a duty be undone. A brief description, however, of the so-called "associative memories" may be of interest to such as are interested to analyze, in a rudimentary way, the underlying mental processes.

The bearing of these memories lies in their relation to the insistent habit of thought, the baneful influence of which upon our actions was set forth in "Why Worry." A certain sojourner by the railway tells me, for example, that he is not in the least disturbed by the noise of passing trains, so long as the engineer does not use the "forced draft." The noise produced by this expedient annoys him beyond measure, *because it seems to him unnecessary.* In other words, it is not noise that disturbs him but the associations he has grouped, whether

rightly or wrongly, around a particular kind of noise. Simply to advise this man to stop fussing would only add to his tribulations; to restore his mental poise he must abate his insistence on the disagreeableness of the unnecessary in general, and modify his attitude toward the forced draft in particular. Without doubt even the wet hen could keep her temper if she would only cease to insist on being dry!

How, then, shall we attack the insistent thought? Obviously by modifying the elements of which it is made up, namely, the memories connected with the subject. To cite a simple illustration of these memories, if we hear the ticking of a watch it calls up the appearance of the watch, the people we have seen wearing watches, and the like, through an endless

series; the ticking also arouses memories of such ideas as may have been at any time aroused in our minds by the subject of watches, apart from anything we have really experienced; and, finally, the sound of the watch may even reawaken whatever emotions may have been stirred in the past by the sight or sound of a watch. In the case of the watch nothing very alarming is likely to proceed from such memories. But suppose we select the word tunnel, thunderstorm, fire, poison, or even, for the supersensitive, the word automobile, elevator, theatre, or crowd, we may start a train of vivid memories, and may arouse emotions so potent as materially to influence the conduct.

I have been told by individuals obsessed by the fear of closed places and the fear of crowds, that in earlier life

no thought of danger intruded itself in such situations. A single experience, or even the report, perhaps, of a theatre-fire, has started a train of thought-associations which have now become so dominant that the mere suggestion of attending the theatre or of entering a railway tunnel produces mental panic. The more fixed such memories become, the harder the task of displacing the old by the new and healthier habit of thought which shall dislodge the unreasoning fears.

It may be of interest at this point to study briefly the question of associative memories as bearing on action in the very low types of life.

According to the brain-physiology of Loeb, which offers an excellent working basis, intelligence exists only in animals high enough in the

scale to possess associative memories. Some of his observations on this point are instructive as well as interesting. It would appear, for example, that certain of the lower types of living things carry out movements apparently requiring intelligence, but in reality quite automatic, in other words, not indicating the possession of a mind. Thus the polyp known as the sea-anemone will, with its antennæ, accept meat and reject paper, an action certainly suggesting intelligence. But if the antennæ are attached to its side, where there is no orifice, the polyp will continue indefinitely to accept meat and reject paper, showing that it neither recognizes the absence of a mouth at that point, nor profits by experience—*it has no associative memories.* The movements of the sea-anemone must

be explained, then, by a power peculiar to its antennæ, no more implying conscious choice than the burrowing of a brook around a stone can be deemed evidence of desire on the part of the brook to reach the sea.

In ascending the scale through the animal kingdom, before we reach those animals which surely have associative memories, hence intelligence, we must pass through a borderland in which it is difficult to decide which of the apparently purposeful movements are merely the result of a natural tendency (instinct), and which of them imply the power of associating the memories and of drawing conclusions, in other words *thinking*.

Very many of the movements thought by some to show intelligence, such as the turning over of the inverted starfish, are shown by care-

fully controlled experiments to be due to inherent tendencies, in the case of the starfish, for example, by the attraction of its under surface for solid bodies. The attraction of light causes some animals instinctively to ascend, while that of gravity causes others to burrow. Such inherent tendencies may lead to movements which seem intelligent, but which are purely automatic, continuous, and altered in no way by experience.

The ant offers an interesting debatable ground. The ant seems to know its friends, and will attack members of a strange nest. But Bethe has shown that if members of its own nest are soaked in the fluids of those of another nest, they are promptly attacked and killed, whereas if they are placed in those from members of

its own nest they are not attacked. Loeb concludes that the action of the ant is due to the "chemical stimuli of certain volatile substances," not in any degree to memory. An interesting experiment of Bethe's shows that ants do not even know their way home in any sense that implies memory, for if a turn-bridge in an ant-street is revolved 180 degrees, the ants are thrown into confusion.

The wasp undoubtedly possesses associative memories. That it can find its way to its nest by other than purely instinctive method is shown by an interesting observation of Loeb upon a wasp who had its hole in his yard. He found the wasp on the sidewalk one day trying to climb the wall with a caterpillar. Finding this impossible it dragged the caterpillar to the adjacent yard where there was

no wall, left it under a tree, flew to its hole, then returned to fetch it.

In the lower types of life nervous irritability begins, perhaps, with the dawn of associative memories and increases with their developing complexity. We may fairly assume that the sea-anemone suffers no annoyance from internal qualm or external maltreatment. We cannot imagine the polyp harboring a grudge, even against the scientist who transfers its antennæ from top to side.

Passing now to the class whose claim to mental equipment Loeb leaves undecided, we find the ant exhibiting, to be sure, a fighting instinct (or should we call it martial spirit?), but we shall find no evidence, I fancy, of its harboring individual resentments, or of falling prey to even the milder grades of nervous break-down.

But when we ascend the animal scale to the possessors of complex associative memories we find abundant evidence of susceptibilities which, though less in degree, are similar in kind to our own. I once numbered among my acquaintance a certain cat of the "sensitive-plant" type, who, when displeased, always turned her back upon society and declined to be placated. Abundant tales of devotion and of remorse attest the possession by the dog of a nervous (mental) equipment second only to our own.

It would be of interest further to follow this line of suggestion, but in man we are dealing with an intelligence of so high a grade that no one will question the existence of associative memories, and we may fairly assume that in whatever degree his beliefs, his emotions, and his actions

are guided by his thoughts, they are guided by associative thoughts. Whether the onion shall please or displease him will depend largely upon the memories this vegetable calls up. If the onion become to him an object either of adoration or of loathing, it is because some of these memories have become so dominant as unduly to sway him. If an overwhelming fear keeps me from entering an elevator, it is because the memories grouped in my mind around the idea *elevator* are so distorted that the emotion fear has become unduly prominent. If I am over-solicitous about the illnesses, or about the prospective illnesses of my friends, it shows that my whole series of memories regarding life needs overhauling. It is such dominance that we can train away by the rearrangement of existing associations and by the

establishment of new ones. This is education.

Various memory-schemes enable us, by artificial associations, to retain facts; various maxims, by epitomizing innumerable memories, help guide our conduct. Both, to be most effective, should have a personal interest. Thus, the following symmetrical figure, which contains the names of the early Roman Emperors, including the time of Epictetus, arouses, perhaps, for another than myself, no more associative memories than if the names were arranged in a straight line.

But it serves firmly to fix these rulers in my mind through association with

the experiment of depressing the line for bad emperors and elevating it for good ones.

Maxims for modifying the mental attitude may be more or less effective though made by another. Such a saying as this: "I can stand other people's troubles, why not stand my own?" may in itself arouse sufficient memory-association to be of general application. But even in this branch of education, the unaided suggestion of another goes but little way. It must be supplemented by continued and enthusiastic endeavor on the part of the person who is to benefit by the suggestion. It is hoped that the following chapters may stimulate such endeavor.

IV

THE HUMAN SENSITIVE-PLANT

For many a grave and learned clerk
And many a gay unlettered spark
With curious touch examines me,
If I can feel as well as he;
And when I bend, retire and shrink,
Says, "Well, 'tis more than one would think!"
Thus life is spent (oh, fie upon't!)
In being touched, and crying "Don't!"

Cowper.

A LADY with "nerves" chanced, on a railway journey not long since, to occupy the coach immediately following the smoker. After the shade had been drawn to protect her eyes from the glare, an undiluted whiff of the not always fragrant weed was wafted through the door. The handkerchief was promptly applied to the nose, and from this time no air was inhaled except through the cambric filter.

Arrival at her destination freeing her at last from this uncomfortable situation, she hurried from the train, sank into her automobile, and drew a long breath of content—from an atmosphere charged with gasoline.

Has this individual a natural antipathy for tobacco and a craving for gasoline? Probably not. It is rather her idea of the fitness of things, and her prior associations, that render the one obnoxious and the other grateful.

We are not gifted from birth with susceptibility to definite sources of annoyance. Most of us are gifted, rather, with an insistent desire to have all things ordered to our liking —the direction of this liking will depend upon circumstances. A gentleman writes me that no one knows what he suffers; a sudden noise pierces his intestines like a knife.

Another tells me that the criticism of a friend causes acute pain in the chest and a sense of suffocation. Another cannot bear to see a picture askew, and to another the odor of peanuts in process of consumption is unendurable. The expressions "agony" and "torture" seem too mild to convey the exact degree of this variety of suffering. This hypersensitiveness, with other faulty mental habits of the neurotic, even if falling short of causing break-down, renders the sufferer uncomfortable to himself and a disturbing element in society, especially if that society contain like elements of intolerance. The human sensitive-plant, I strongly suspect, would be in no more danger of nervous prostration than her vegetable prototype if her reaction to promiscuous touch were likewise purely physical.

A lifelike picture of the human sensitive-plant in olden times appears in a description of the wife of the Emperor Hadrian, by Ebers:

"You men never do observe what hurts us women—there are five and thirty doors in my rooms! I had them counted—five and thirty! If they were not old and made of valuable wood I should really believe that they had been made as a practical joke on me!"

"Some of them might be supplemented by curtains."

"Oh! never mind; a few miseries more or less in my life do not matter. Sit a little further off," said Sabina, pressing her jewelled right hand on her ear as if she were suffering pain in it.

It would seem that Hadrian avoided the society of his much-enduring spouse, but I have known a husband to sacrifice his life to a twentieth-century Sabina. If Hadrian were alive and reading *Puck,* he would know how to sympathize with the young newly-wed whose wife shed tears when the dinner was praised, because, she declared, she was loved for her cooking instead of for herself!

It is worth while for every one who detects in his make-up the elements of this sensitiveness to cultivate for his ideal the commonplace, instead of the dainty. To do this he must train himself to overcome all kinds of aversions, whether for things or for people. In this connection I feel under the greatest obligation to Maudsley for the opportunity to read, ponder, and apply the following passage:

> Some turn all impressions into suspicion, take offense easily, brood over slights, magnify trifles, feel acutely if opposition hurts their self-love, and, identifying their self-hood with truth and right, persuade themselves that they are suffering great wrong.

To relieve conditions resulting from such faulty mental habits is the aim of "Psychotherapy," as well as of the movement sometimes called "New Thought," though its analogue may be found in the suggestions of

the oldest philosophers. In the early days of the Empire, mental treatment was given a prominent place by Petronius, satirist of Rome, the Beau Brummel of Nero's court, who wrote:

Medicus nihil aliud est quam animi consolatio,

which I shall venture to translate:

For the soul's comfort simply, serves the leech.

The path by which the change of ideal is attained is not always a direct one. A suggestive thought will sometimes reach, by chance, a point to which it could not have been driven by the force either of logic or of eloquence. Such a thought may cause the patient to institute and carry on a line of reasoning for himself.

It is true that he who plants the suggestion may chance to need his own philosophy, as did the physician who essayed to treat a certain patient

whose sensitiveness took the direction of inability to touch anything which had been handled by another. So strong was her aversion that she was in danger of abandoning work and play, except in so far as they could be pursued in solitude. Many hours were spent by the physician in the attempt, by anecdote and maxim, to alter her ideals; she was gradually led to study how much, instead of how little, she could stand. The desired frame of mind was finally achieved, upon which she was able to pursue her vocation with no further trouble. At this point a bill for services rendered by the physician was viewed by the patient with disfavor because she had cured herself and the physician had only told her stories! Fortunately professional usefulness is no longer measured by the drug.

In the way of treatment, too much faith must not be pinned to single suggestions, whether made under hypnotism or otherwise; the very readiness of relief strongly suggests impermanence of cure. Temporary alleviation of symptoms does not always mean cure of disease. The faithful, long-continued efforts of the patient himself seem to me a *sine qua non,* and, even at the best, cure is a strong word to apply to such modification of inborn tendencies as can be brought about even by prolonged suggestive methods. There is a universal negativism which stands in the way of the direct appeal if unsupported by the co-operation of its recipient. The effort to arouse the ambition of another too often produces indifference, if not resentment.

It is sometimes possible to turn this

negativism to advantage. I was once consulted by an intense, self-centred, and high-strung young woman who could not even sit in a chair except in the attitude of a poise for flight. Many previous consultants had assured her that she could learn to relax, but had exhausted all efforts to this end in vain. Deciding that there was nothing to lose by the experiment, I surprised her by announcing it was hardly worth her while to try, for she could not do it. She left the office with a stern expression, to return some months later completely relaxed, *just to show me that I was mistaken!*

A colleague tells me of an obstinate case of nail-biting in which the negative method of suggestion was used successfully. He made a small wager with the boy that he could not stop

the habit for a certain period. At each visit he urged him to recommence, since he was only losing time. The boy won the wager and told the physician *he* had wasted time, for the greater his urgency, the less he cared to bite the nails. A teacher once told me of a boy who persistently doubled himself over his book. The attempt forcibly to raise the book only increased the trouble, but when it was pressed down the boy straightened until quite erect. If you wish further to illustrate this negativism, and do not mind an angry look, try forcibly correcting the attitude of your round-shouldered friend. But if you would really help him, place under his eye the picture which appeared in a recent magazine, illustrating the correct and the incorrect posture for pedestrianism. The chances are that

when he stands up he throws back his shoulders and swings his feet before him instead of dragging them after him.

This brings us to a very important distinction between two methods of "suggestion." I refer to the difference between influencing the conscious, and influencing the "subconscious" mind, or mind below the level of the distinct consciousness. Hypnotic suggestions are supposed to affect the latter, which has its seat, according to one writer, in the spinal cord. The object of hypnotic suggestion is to implant, upon this so-called subconscious mind, seed which shall bear fruit in conscious action. To me it appeals more strongly to place before the conscious and reasoning mind a line of thought which may, by practice, sink at last to the subcon-

scious level; in other words, become automatic. It is surely by way of the reason, if at all, that the human sensitive-plant will be led to alter her ideals—to mix with her porcelain a little common clay.

Among the most fixed of our aversions is the conviction that we cannot stand certain noises at night, but the change of ideal is comparatively easy for the most sensitive of us if we become truly interested. We shall soon find ourselves anticipating the noises of the night with a view to seeing *how much,* instead of *how little,* we can stand, and instead of becoming suffused with heat when a door is slammed or a shoe dropped overhead, shall find ourselves saying, "Never touched me."

Some are abnormally sensitive to their own moods. "If I could only be

as happy to-day as I was yesterday," wailed a nervous patient the other day. But no one has a good time all the time; if he did, he would not have a good time at all.

The study of ancient history is an excellent antidote for the tendency of the oversensitive to dwell upon trifles. Emerson [1] says: "This remedies the defect of our too great nearness to ourselves. This throws our actions into perspective; and as crabs, goats, scorpions, the balance, and the water-pot lose all their meanness when hung as signs in the zodiac, so I can see my own vices without heat in the persons of Solomon, Alcibiades, and Catiline."

The reading of Ebers's romances, from the story of Joshua down to that of the Emperor Hadrian, is of great

[1] Essay on History.

assistance in adjusting into the mental perspective the petty annoyances of to-day.

> There sits drear Egypt 'mid beleaguering sands,
> Half woman and half beast,
> The burnt out torch within her mouldering hands
> That once lit all the East.[2]

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[2] Lowell.

V

THE HATTER

I will not shut me from my kind,
And, lest I stiffen into stone,
I will not eat my heart alone,
Nor feel with sighs the passing wind.
TENNYSON: *In Memoriam.*

SOLITUDE is dangerous for the worrier. Perhaps the expression "mad as a hatter" came from the fact that the miner who works alone, or "under his own hat," is called a hatter, as is the Australian swagman who chooses to work or play alone.[3] This origin of the word "hatter" should suffice to explain the phrase, though the Century Dictionary ascribes it rather to an old word meaning spider. But, even supposing madness to be a notable characteristic of the spider, the

[3] Chamber's Journal, May 2, 1882.

hornet seems to have pre-empted this ground. It seems not unreasonable to assume that the madness of the hatter refers not to his anger, but to the danger of mental derangement resulting from the habit of avoiding one's kind, and perhaps to the inherent queerness this tendency suggests.

The danger in solitude, excepting for the self-reliant, is the tendency to a morbid modification of revery. I do not for a moment deprecate such degree of restful reflection upon the past as may advantageously modify the future. Nor does the joyous revery of Wordsworth leave anything to be desired:

> For oft when on my couch I lie,
> In vacant or in pensive mood,
> They flash upon that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude,
> And then my heart with pleasure fills,
> And dances with the daffodils.

But the worrier must mend his ways to experience these delights. No sooner does he open the gate than this peaceful assemblage of thoughts is transformed into a howling mob of futile fears and anxious doubts that trample on the daffodils! The inevitable tendency of revery in the morbidly sensitive is toward the review, in pain and travail, of past blunders and shortcomings, of trials present, and of ills to come. This pseudo-revery tends, not in the direction of rest from past labors and incentive to future efforts, but rather toward the exhausting restlessness elsewhere described by Cowper[4] in so graphic terms as strongly to suggest that the mirror was his model:

> Look where he comes in this embowered alcove,
> Stand close concealed and see a statue move.

[4] Retirement.

Lips busy, and eyes fixed, feet falling slow,
Arms hanging idly down, hands clasped below
Interpret to the marking eye distress
Such as its symptoms can alone express.

There is no daffodil dance in this frame of mind! To my own private stock of commandments I have been forced to add: "Thou shalt not commit revery!"

Even the revery of Thoreau, though given an objective element in nature-study, doubtless tended to morbid seclusion and to unhealthy exaltation of the ego. "I live in the angle of a leaden wall," he says, "into whose alloy was poured a little bell-metal. Sometimes in the repose of my mid-day there reaches my ears the confused tintinnabulum from without. It is the noise of my contemporaries," upon which passage More [5] comments: "Could any image

[5] Shelburne Essays.

be more sublimely impertinent?" That the cultivation of nature-study is not incompatible with the cultivation of one's contemporaries, to say nothing of taking a prominent part in affairs, is shown by the life and writings of Sir Francis Bacon.

When the worrier lets the mental wheels go round without "coupling on" to something tangible he is letting an engine "run." Just as the propeller of a steamship does better under water than when racing in the air, so the mind will do better with a legitimate load. What would you say if the chauffeur at every corner released the clutch and let the engine run indefinitely? Sooner turn the wrong corner than play such tricks with machinery and time. "It is better to travel hopefully than ever to arrive." When we sit and think, and

think, and the more we think the more life seems not worth the living, we must remind ourselves that it surely isn't unless we do something.

And if the lonely hat of the miner suggests madness, what of the lonely nightcap of the wakeful worrier? It surely suggests something thereto allied when we wake with a start as the clock strikes one, in a state of nervous agitation and restless want of courage, possessing energy to roll mountains, but lacking the pluck to decide the simplest question.

> These shall the fury Passions tear
> The vultures of the mind,
> Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,
> And Shame that skulks behind.[6]

Neither this time of night nor this frame of mind conduces to healthy revery. This is rather the time and

[6] Thomas Gray: "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College."

the occasion to reflect, so far as we are capable of reflection, that the sunrise, the cold plunge, and the warm coffee will readjust our mental attitude; that the doing of the daily duties of the morrow, each in turn with single mind, will dissipate these vague forebodings. The night's duty is to get what rest we may. This rest is favored by the habit of *bodily* repose (to which reference has been already made). It may well prove beyond our reach to quite subdue distressing thought, but it is, I believe, within the reach of all to acquire the knack of keeping the body still. The resulting conservation of energy well repays the effort. If one can lie absolutely quiescent for an hour in spite of anxious thoughts, this attitude will in turn tend to tranquillize the thoughts, whereas the constant move-

ment of the feet, the rolling from side to side, and, still more, restlessly pacing the chamber only increase the agitation, add to the wakefulness, and promote exhaustion.

Just how many hours are necessary for sleep? No one knows, and it is no matter if we never know. No amount of loss we are likely to sustain will injure us so much as the mental tension implied in our insistence to settle the question. Of one thing we are sure,—that counting the hours of sleep will only keep us awake.

The tendency toward hatterism as exhibited by the philosopher himself is illustrated by the following anecdote:[7]

"Chwang Tzŭ was fishing in the Pu when the prince of Chu sent two

[7] Giles: "A History of Chinese Literature." D. Appleton & Co., 1901.

high officials to ask him to take charge of the administration of the Chu State.

"Chwang Tzŭ went on fishing, and without turning his head said, 'I have heard that in Chu there is a sacred tortoise which has been dead now some three thousand years, and that the prince keeps this tortoise carefully enclosed in a chest on the altar of his ancestral temple. Now would this tortoise rather be dead, and have its remains venerated, or be alive and wagging its tail in the mud?'

" 'It would rather be alive,' replied the two officials, 'and wagging its tail in the mud.'

" 'Begone!' cried Chwang Tzŭ, 'I too will wag my tail in the mud.' "

Epicurus, who did so much by precept and example toward the acquirement of mental poise, was also some-

thing of a hatter. Though Epicurus affirmed that mental tranquillity "may be maintained though one mingles with the world," he not only counselled his followers to take no part in public affairs, but even advised against incurring the responsibility of marriage and the begetting of children. Upon which Epictetus quaintly expresses his opinion that the parents of Epicurus, even if they could have foreseen that he would have been the author of such doctrines, would not have thrown him away! It must be acknowledged that avoidance of responsibilities is a sufficiently objectionable feature of the philosophy of Epicurus to have justified Horace in its exchange for Stoicism.

Just as the silent man in company is often credited with the depth of

still waters, so the reverist too often flatters himself that his thoughts are worth the thinking. The ability to formulate thoughts into words, spoken or written, is not, it is true, the sole measure of their worth; nor does money always represent value, but it is the most tangible and generally applicable method of valuation at command. It is not always safe to depend upon an intelligent expression of countenance in the speechless. This is curiously illustrated by those in whom an apoplectic stroke has removed the power of articulate speech. It is common for a patient with intelligence greatly reduced by this trouble to smile, nod, and appear to be actively following the most extended conversation. In such case not only the friends but even the trained nurse often believe that

the patient understands everything though he cannot talk. But if he is requested to touch his left ear with his right forefinger, sometimes only to point out his left ear, his bewilderment exposes at once the shallowness of his intelligence.

Let the ambitious reverist who imagines he is planning an effective campaign try to assemble a few of his thoughts on paper. The inspection of the page would be worth more than groping for the tangled ends of years of revery untranscribed. Without minimizing the importance of mentally planning one's work, it is always in place to ask how far the planning is effective. Suppose one essays to write a book,—a certain amount of planning is, of course, essential, but it is the exceptional person who can pick his course without a chart. If

the author's ideas are too nebulous for crystallization they will surely never reach the reviewer. It is true that an occasional, even, perhaps, a frequent, bright idea "pops" into the unoccupied mind in the middle of the night—but it is a good test of its value to jot it down and see if it passes muster by daylight.

It is said that in the theatre at Pompeii small ivory skulls were given as passes to the "deadheads" of that day. I do not know whether this was simply a revival of the Egyptian custom to introduce, in times of festivity, a reminder of death, or whether the skull was supposed to convey a certain reproach to this particular class, but I have sometimes thought that a similar token would be an appropriate reminder to some of us to-day that we are avoid-

ing many of the responsibilities and anxieties that are bound to accompany the pleasures of mingling with our kind. It is trite to say that we may have all the advantages of living in a civilized community without even emerging to cast a vote on election day. I fancy that the nearest approach to mental comfort and a protection from nervous break-down is possessed, not by him who listens to the seductive suggestion:

> Take me, and lull me into perfect sleep,
> Down, down, far hidden in thy duskiest cave;
> While all the clamorous years above me sweep
> unheard,[8]

but by the busy man whose duties bring him into constant touch with his kind, provided he is by Nature endowed, or has by philosophy acquired, the art of passing from duty to duty, with concentration on the work in

[8] James Thomson.

hand, dismissing for the time such fears, regrets, and forebodings as handicap his efforts.

One may be something of a hatter even in society. In this event his attitude is peculiarly liable to misinterpretation. If a man sits silent in general conversation, or when addressed blurts out an unqualified negative, he is credited with a delight in giving offense, a trait really quite foreign to his nature. When thought most bold he is most shy, and his abruptness is often due merely to a lack of facility in uttering the amenities. Similarly, the "hatter" is not necessarily arrogant and self-sufficient; he may be rather morbidly anxious to do no wrong, to be guilty of no awkwardness, to incur no ridicule and no censure—in other words, he may be overconscientious. But we must reflect

before giving way to the lure of seclusion that all these considerations mean a morbid exaltation of the ego. We must remember that others make mistakes, that others are censured, and others ridiculed; for us to seek immunity is to be abnormally self-centred.

In marked contrast to the tenets of the hatter, and especially to the views of Epicurus, come, with robust message, the example and maxims of Marcus Aurelius, who trained himself and urged his followers to train themselves in the subjugation of the ego.

"As thou thyself art a component part of a social system, so let every act of thine be a component part of social life. Whatever act of thine then has no reference either immediately or remotely to a social end, this

tears asunder thy life, and does not allow it to be one, and it is of the nature of a meeting, just as when in a popular assembly a man acting by himself stands apart from the general agreement."[9]

"But the Stoic emperor has a special message, it would seem, to our own age," says Walter Everett.[10] "When luxury and pleasure-seeking abound; when physical pain has come to be regarded by many as the greatest of ills; when prudence and safety are exalted as the chief practical virtues, and often mean, alas, little more than rules for material success; when it is demanded that religion must, above all else, be comforting; when even philosophy, as interpreted by many, must be made to yield us

[9] Long's "Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius," ix, 23.

[10] Address on the unveiling of statue of Marcus Aurelius, Brown University, 1908.

reasons for what we desire to believe —in such an age we may well be recalled to a more heroic view of life."

Such of us as feel the call to seek protection of the hat will do well, before yielding, to read and ponder the words of the Philosopher-Emperor, who gave his message, not from the arrogance of superior endowment, but with the modesty of one who had conquered himself, and who knew whereof he spoke when he reminded the self-centred that "The prime principle of man's station is social." To ourself we can without affront apply the ruder phrase: Don't be a hatter!

VI

SIDETRACTIBILITY

To do two things at once is to do neither.
OLD LATIN MAXIM.

I SUPPOSE I am not the only one in the world who has, while dressing, caught himself abandoning one step in the toilet to commence upon another, sometimes even upon a third. This desultory method of procedure in simple matters offers a clue to another of the faulty mental habits that tend to handicap our efforts in conducting larger business, and to add each its mite to the wear and tear of the "nerves."

This habit of mind, which I shall venture, by way of adding something to the nomenclature of psychology, to

call "sidetractibility," is particularly common among the "nervous." Nor is it limited to the badly-educated and the obtuse. On the contrary, like the other faulty mental habits we have discussed, it is prone to appear as well in the intelligent, the educated, and the mentally alert.

A woman patient of this type, plunged in regretful retrospection and bewailment of past shortcomings, interviews her medical adviser. He reminds her that encumbering the mind with such thoughts is like decorating the house with ancient calendars. He may expect some such reply as, "I abominate calendars!" or, "I don't do that; I remove even every unrestful color!"

This variety of distractibility means nothing more alarming than intense preoccupation, combined with

a keen realization of the demands of conversation. It implies, however, indifference to the "goal-idea," and such indifference is sure to hinder effective work.

Figurative language and elaborate comparisons are wasted on individuals of this class. If such a patient is told that faulty mental habits require as much attention as the habit of drink, in nine cases out of ten the answer will be something like this: "Oh, I don't drink. Thank the Lord, that is *one* thing I *don't* do!"

Given a desk full of affairs requiring attention, what doubt can there be that such a woman will fritter away much of her energy, and that the sum total of the morning's work will consist in numerous half finished tasks, when one completed would be far better.

This seems to me a faulty tendency well worth a little attention and a great deal of training. Just as it is better for the chronic doubter to *pounce* upon some task, better the wrong one than not to pounce at all, so it is better for the sidetractible to complete the task once started, even though wrongly started, than to allow himself to drift into this desultory, helpless, and inconsequential habit of thought and action.

It is not too trivial, perhaps, to commence this training in simple matters. The desultory dresser, for example, when about to lapse, if not sufficiently inventive to manufacture for himself a better maxim, may recall his wandering attention thus: "Either tie the necktie or the shoestring," and force himself to complete each step in the toilet before

starting upon another. Indeed, some such silly saying may serve as well as a more pretentious effort to re-establish the wavering attention when more important matters than the toilet are in question.

The sidetractibility of the preoccupied is not to be confounded with the heedlessness of the inattentive or the thoughtlessness of the indifferent.

Amusing examples of the latter were furnished by a certain stenographer with a "business" training, to whom I was obliged, in time of stress, to resort. One morning I dictated to her a letter stating among other things that the patient should eat an egg every morning, and that she should take a cold bath followed by a brisk rub with two Turkish towels. This harmless counsel was transformed into the following: "She

should take an egg every morning, followed by two Turkish towels." At another time, in the medical report of a claimant for damages was included the statement that she should be allowed a few months for recovery. The finished product stated that a few *years* were to be allowed for recovery.

"Did I say years?" I asked.

"Oh, no," she replied, "but I didn't think a patient with all those symptoms would get well in any few months!"

The mental trait illustrated by these vagaries has nothing in common with the "New England conscience." It may lead, as it did in this case, to the dissolution of partnerships, but it implies a far too comfortable state of mind to tolerate a nervous breakdown. As soon look for neurasthenia in the old lady of whom the lawyer

tells that she asked him to sign her name and let her make her mark because she had lost her eyesight.

"How do you spell it?" he inquired.

"Why, to tell the truth," she replied, "I haven't been able to spell since I lost my teeth!"

VII

CHARACTER-LEAKAGE

No one is free who commands not himself.

EPICTETUS.

THE first step I have to suggest for training in self-control may, to the ambitious, seem trivial, but I have found it extremely practical.

The game of self-control is like that of golf—it takes many years of training and practice to accomplish even fair results. Only the genius becomes adept. But in any event, the aspirant for the long drive must first learn *to hold the club.*

I have become convinced that no one can achieve mental tranquillity who cannot learn to keep his *body* still,—to refrain from the habit

movements called by Professor Wenley, of Michigan University, signs of "character-leakage." Among these movements the most familiar are drumming and tapping with the fingers and toes, clearing the throat, and walking restlessly about. This is the sort of thing our mother taught us to avoid in childhood, but it did not make the impression it ought because we thought she was only trying her voice. If one can refrain from a single movement of this kind on the first day, he has begun to learn to "hold the club." The hand may be easily arrested, for example, on its way to massaging the countenance by having in readiness this reminder: "Push not thy face!"

Elbert Hubbard says of a successful trainer, formerly of athletes, now of nervous invalids: "When he sits he

does not cross his legs, play the devil's tattoo with his hands, twist his moustache, stroke his hair, scratch his nose, adjust his necktie, nor examine his finger-nails. He completes his toilet in his room."

Some time when impatiently waiting for your train cease that restless pacing up and down, and try the following experiment: Stand at attention with your back against the wall, and say to yourself, "I will see how long I can stand in this position without moving hand or foot." Do not be afraid of attracting notice—no one will cast a glance in your direction; all are too preoccupied to note surroundings. If you succeed in becoming interested, you will find yourself rather disappointed than otherwise to have the experiment interrupted by the arrival of your train.

"What's the reason," one of these angry trampers paused to exclaim, "I always see so many more cars going the other way than I do going my way?"

"I suppose," answered his easy-going friend, "it's because you take the first one that comes along going your way."

It may, perhaps, be claimed that when a supreme effort is to be made, continuous movements keep the muscles in readiness. It is possible that the ball-player is more ready to catch the ball if he keeps his hands in motion beforehand, but I strongly suspect that if he could learn to stand at ease, he would be quite as ready for the emergency. In any event, it seems hardly probable that there is enough temporary advantage to offset the tiring effect of indefinitely con-

tinuing these movements. Suppose, again, that we are preparing for an *intellectual* effort, how can twiddling the watch-chain, consulting the time-piece at frequent intervals, adjusting the eyeglasses, and snapping the fingers stimulate the *brain* to more effective work?

It is doubtless true that when one has formed the lifelong habit of accompanying every undertaking by such movements, their prevention throws him into confusion. Amusing instances are cited of public speeches spoilt by withdrawal of the customary stimulus. But the fact that we rely upon a habit does not argue its necessity or even its usefulness. It shows weakness rather than strength that one person relies upon alcohol, another upon a cigar, and still another upon a cup of strong tea, and

it is safe to assert that if the individual thus handicapped had learned to forego these stimulants he could perform work, whether physical or intellectual, with equal effectiveness and less exhaustion. Nor is it ever too late to undertake one's re-education. There is no question in my mind of the justness of Crane's observation: "Persistent, faithful, determined effort will overcome the most dominant habit that ever fastened itself on a human being."

It is when we are placed, by accident or illness, in a position of prolonged recumbency that we reap the reward of the practice suggested in this chapter. This is particularly true if the injury, say a broken leg, is unaccompanied by general bodily illness. Once placed in this position, it is too late to acquire the ability

to retain indefinitely, and without special discomfort, the posture necessary for the healing of the fracture, and we may be thankful if we have already gained some self-control. It seems much to ask of the busy man that instead of fretting his way through the idleness enforced by a fractured thigh-bone, he view the experience as a needed vacation, and take the occasion to recuperate his jangled nerves, instead of adding to their wear and tear, but really there is no one who cannot lessen somewhat the discomfort of this situation by the cultivation of mental and physical calm.

"But I never was sick in my life, and I never took a vacation, and I can't stand it," fumes the patient.

"Much to be thankful for, and much lost time to be made up," might

the medical adviser answer, if the direct appeal were ever effective.

Before commencing the training against "leakage" movements, it is essential that they be recognized. We are well aware that our neighbor clears his throat and smacks his lips at regular intervals, but when we first learn that *we* do these things we are taken quite aback. These customary acts produce no more sensation than the pressure of the ring upon our finger. We must begin our training, then, by realizing the leakage. We must have the check-impulse ready, just as when one throws his line for the nimble brook-trout he must be ready for the reverse movement, or the fish is off and the bait as well.

The question may be asked whether this self-observation does not savor of the morbid introspection we are coun-

selled to avoid? I think not. Morbid introspection has to do with our feelings rather than with our acts. Even if self-observation be introspective, it is no more morbid to cultivate repose of body and mind than to practise using the hair-brush and the fork instead of the fingers. If we should overlook ourselves entirely we might become obnoxious to our neighbors.

VIII

THE MAGNIFICATION OF THE UNESSENTIAL

De minimis non curat lex.

SUPPOSE, on looking out of the window some fine morning, we see that our neighbor's hens have again flown the fence and are strolling comfortably about our premises. We are conscious of a distinct sense of irritation, not to say indignation. The sun may be shining brightly, but not for us; the flowers may be blooming or the apples ripening, according to the season, but we do not see them; those hens occupy too much of the foreground. We can hardly wait to dress before we convert their stroll into a panic of fuss and feathers.

Suppose, now, before giving way to this impulse, we reflect that if those were our hens, and if we were as interested in cultivating hens as we are in cultivating our troubles, we should watch their awkward antics with pleasure instead of with pain, and that an occasional cackle, instead of sending a creepy feeling down our spine, would pleasantly remind us that eggs are now selling at sixty cents a dozen. How tranquillizing to our nervous system would be the effect of adopting a similar comfortable-to-ourselves and kindly-to-our-neighbor attitude!

A householder once told me, in illustrating this change in point of view, that he bought, some time ago, a vacant lot of land next his residence lest another erect thereon a block of stores. It was not long, he said, be-

fore it dawned on him that a modest rent-roll would offset the tax bill, and he built the block himself!

To the person who focusses his vision on bits of paper, or on the common house-fly, the former will spoil the fairest view, and the latter be fought (or fled) as if it were a swarm of angry hornets.

A sensitive individual, to whom the sound of a certain bell in the neighborhood caused profoundest misery, finally reduced the sound to bearable dimensions by imagining he had just been rescued from a prolonged and involuntary stay upon a desert island where neither bell had been audible nor the necessities of life procurable.

How much time, and how many internal blushes we waste upon the memory of past "breaks" which, however weighty to ourselves, were

but incidents to others. A good antidote for this frame of mind is the conjuring up of the worse "breaks" we might have made—the list is formidable. Again, it may serve a turn to say to ourselves, "Other people don't mind if you do make a fool of yourself—they rather like it."

Arthur Benson on shyness,[11] says, "Most of us dislike appearing fools far more than we dislike feeling knaves." A friend of mine tells me that all the crimes he ever committed have given him fewer midnight qualms than the memory of a certain incident of his boyhood. He had been reading a novel, the young hero of which, a curly-headed youth, had two pet gambols which were viewed with delight by the society in which he moved. One was, when making a call,

[11] At Large.

to lie upon the rug, the other to vault through windows rather than enter doors. This seeming an easy way of achieving popularity, he determined, forgetting that straight hair and a cow-lick did not lend themselves to these antics, to try the trick himself. The opportunity was not long to seek. He shortly found himself outside the window in which was seated a young lady of his acquaintance. To her proposition that she let him in by the door, he cried, "Don't trouble, I will vault through the window," and the words were followed by the deed. To his horror he found himself in the middle of a chamber in which the young lady's mother was completing her toilet. Regarding his escape his mind is a blank, but he has jumped through that window several thousand times since, generally when "under the hat."

Another friend to whom this story was told capped it by an experience of his own. A corner-stone had been laid for a church in his town. After the building was finished he found that each of his friends had a piece of the stone. Without realizing that these had been chipped from the back of the stone, he sallied forth with his hammer and knocked a large piece from the finely polished corner, and this he did at an age when he should have known better. That bit of stone, he said, had haunted him ever since.

The healthy-minded individual can dismiss all such memories, if indeed they recur at all, with a smile, but to the self-centred they furnish material for perpetual discomfort, and contribute, each its mite, to the nerve-wear that predisposes to break-down upon the accession of new misfortune. I know more than one adult

who attributes to some youthful mistake all his subsequent misfortunes and his inability to succeed in life.

Among the unessentials that we cultivate I am not sure that we should not include *ourselves*. Collins [12] says, "Except to a few you are of no importance whatsoever. You must realize that save to the few persons that constitute your family your welfare does not concern any one. Treat yourself if you can as the world treats you, as too commonplace to be noted!"

It is particularly desirable to adopt this attitude toward our trivial complaints. I have heard of a young lady who had long contemplated with delight a trip to Europe, but her joy was changed to woe when it appeared that she must set forth with a cold

[12] Letters to a Neurologist.

sore on her lip! This frame of mind is the direct outcome of the insistent desire always to feel absolutely comfortable, and always to be quite well, —but others do not possess immunity from the ills of life, why should we? It is the exaltation of the ego that prompts our unreasonable insistence on this point. How absurd to spend a moment in deploring the fact I have barked my shin. If I must give it a thought at all, how much more reasonable to congratulate myself that I did not break my neck, or, worse yet, that of my friend. I wish Epicurus had written a homily in his own peculiar style on "How to be useful with a crick in the back."

Lack of personal responsibility on the part of hotel dwellers, and of travellers in safely civilized countries, favors the magnification of the unes-

sential. In a chapter on American sensitiveness, John Graham Brooks[13] cites the fact that a certain foreign critic gave up a contemplated trip to this country because he suffered so much from the perpetual inquiry, "How do you like America?" The same writer quotes the following experience of a well-known visitor:

"At the hotel in Buffalo I was again tormented by some new acquaintances with the old, tiresome questions, 'How do you like America?' 'How do you like the States?' 'Does Buffalo look according to your expectations?' to which latter question I replied that I had not expected anything from Buffalo."

Brooks continues: "This plague of questioning assumed many forms and became a sore trial to her." He then

[13] As Others See Us.

relates her experience in the South, where, it appears, she was distressed beyond measure by the continued proffer of pickles.

These are pertinent criticisms, beyond doubt, of our national characteristics, but what of the mental attitude which renders the traveller unable to endure the minor annoyances incident to sojourn in a foreign land? Truly to be pitied is the lion from abroad, who is forced by his entertainers to see too much, eat too much, drink too much, and talk too much, but even more deserving of sympathy is the individual who adds to such legitimate sources of exhaustion the internal tribulations engendered by a supersensitive disposition.

The magnification of the unessential is not always a sign of overconscientiousness. In illustration of this

I may cite a certain surgical report I came across while studying a series of hospital records. From this report it appeared that the patient was struck on the head by a sign of definite dimensions, which fell from a certain window, in a particular house, on a designated street. In place of a description of her symptoms appeared only this: "The sign read 'Merry Christmas.' "

The individuals most given to "character-leakage" are the very ones who find it impossible to endure such signs in others, and while learning to inhibit these movements it is well to bear in mind the fact that it is a magnification of the unessential to find them unbearable in others. Why should it irritate me if my neighbor wears the moustache several inches longer than I do, and twirls it at regu-

lar intervals? Doubtless he takes as much pleasure in turning the whisker as I in turning the phrase by which I characterize his action, or in doing many things worse of which he takes no notice. If he does not begrudge me the one why should I begrudge him the other? What has it to do with me anyway? To the commandment then, "Push not thy face," it is worth while to add, "Fret not if thy neighbor pusheth his." We are now learning to hold the club. The next step is to adopt the same reasoning and the same practice toward the various sources of annoyance which cause us perturbation.

Again, instead of saying, "I will sit by this man till he grunts, scratches his ear, or the like," a distinct gain in nervous control is made when we say, "I will sit by this man long enough

to discover if he can do a single thing I cannot stand."

The difficulty of following up this line of precept by example is instanced by the fact that the same poet (Cowper) who wrote,

> The modest, sensible, and well-bred man
> Will not affront me, and no other can,

upon failing to receive acknowledgment for poems presented, uses this bitter language toward his thoughtless friends:

> Your sullen silence serves at least to tell
> Your altered heart; and so, my friend, farewell.
>
> * * * * *
>
> But thou, it seems (what cannot grandeur do,
> Though but a dream!) art grown disdainful too;
> And strutting in thy school of queens and kings,
> Who fret their hour and are forgotten things,
> Hast caught the cold distemper of the day,
> And, like his lordship, cast thy friend away.
>
> * * * * *
>
> We hug the hopes of constancy and truth,
> Such is the folly of our dreaming youth;
> And soon, alas! detect the rash mistake
> That sanguine inexperience loves to make;
> And view with tears the expected harvest lost
> Decayed by time, or whitened by a frost.

But the question of our friends' acknowledgment of the product of our pen does not compare in importance with the question whether our book is of any earthly use. His crime, especially if he is a non-bookmaker, is no greater than the average old bachelor commits every time he fails to admire his neighbors' children. Doubtless we ourselves have taken too much for granted our friend's six-cylinder Raynaud, and his skill in its guidance, but he, instead of sulking, has viewed our indifference with affectionate forbearance and has given us still another ride. Why not then shoot, as the inimitable Dr. Crothers [14] would suggest, the peccadillo of our other friend with a camera, instead of with a gun?

It may aid us to modify our magni-

[14] The Pardoner's Wallet.

fication of some unessential to recall Milton's minimization, for the sake of completing his answer to Salmatius, of a function most of us would deem essential. "I did not long hesitate," he told De Moulin, "whether my duty should be preferred to my eyes."

It behooves some of us to place ourselves in a group with such heroes of the earth and take a bird's-eye view of the combination. Emerson says:

"The field cannot be well seen within the field. The astronomer must have his diameter of the earth's orbit as a base to find the parallax of any star."

IX

FEARS

I, too, have longed for trenchant force,
And will like a dividing spear;
Have praised the keen unscrupulous course,
Which knows no doubt, which feels no fear.

MATTHEW ARNOLD: *A Farewell.*

AFTER a peace of thirty-odd years the United States became involved in war with a country over seas. News arrived that the enemy's fleet had left home waters, its exact destination unknown.

Among the feelings with which this intelligence was received by coastwise inhabitants of New England it is useless to deny that fear played a considerable part. Seashore resorts were poorly patronized, inland security boxes were in demand, and inquiries were made regarding the feasibility

of bombardment insurance. I know of no more striking illustration of the fact that too much safety is a dangerous thing. The blessing of prolonged immunity from the various plagues brings with it the curse of increasing cowardice. The report of a small epidemic of smallpox in the City of Boston, a few years since, materially lessened travel thither, and proved a boon to the suburban tradesman. Though few among the inhabitants of neighboring towns would actually acknowledge that they were stayed by fear, it was very generally found convenient to avoid the city.

Even those of us who favor universal peace and the promotion, by every means, of protection against disease, must allow that over against the dangers of war and pestilence must be set the tendency of "in-

glorious safety'' toward the magnification of selfish interests, toward the cultivation of fears and general emasculation.

While such considerations hardly justify the encouragement of war and pestilence, they may serve to remind us of the importance of adopting in times of peace and safety a different ideal, of taking a broader view of the world and our place in it, in short, of cultivating our courage, and training ourselves to

> Believe not these suggestions, which proceed
> From anguish of the mind and humors black
> That mingle with thy fancy.

The cultivation of courage by taking thought may seem like pulling oneself up by the boot-straps; but courage and cowardice are purely mental traits and can be materially modified by mental processes.

We may deceive ourselves into attributing the pallor, the chattering of the teeth, the weakness of the knees, and the sense of goneness-in-the-interior to a physical defect quite outside our control. This only shows that we fear to acknowledge our fear for what it is. Fine distinctions have been raised regarding the exact status of fear, regarding the ability of one to fear, yet be courageous, and the like. Such questions, though of academic interest, have no place in this chapter, the object of which is rather to suggest, without elaborate analysis, how, by taking thought, we can actually lessen our fears and thus add somewhat to our moral, though we cannot to our physical, stature. If this is feasible we shall have taken a step in the control of "those nerves."

Fears of the improbable are none the less coercive. Once the mind of the obsessed is focussed, for example, on the danger of infection, there is no limit to the precautions suggested by this fear. I have recently heard of a physician who not only sterilizes all milk consumed in the house, but even also boils the butter. I have recently heard that the anxious relatives of a patient engaged a special attendant at a sanitarium for the sole purpose of remaining on guard outside the patient's door in order to rescue him in case of fire.

These fears are constantly changing. Dangers ignored by the *sensitif* to-day may assume gigantic proportions to-morrow. If a mouse chance to take refuge in the clothing of a man it will increase his respect for a phobia common to the other sex. It is

necessary to combat, not simply separate fears, but the tendency to fear.

The various phobias of hypochondria may be summed up under the insistent desire for absolute safety, and the dread not only of obvious dangers but of intangible ills to whose nature the hypochondriac can give no clue. Curious complaints abound, like that of a certain patient who rushed to the neurological clinic in alarm because he had forgotten how to breathe!

But the hypochondriac does not monopolize the fear of disease and pain. Those who really have serious disease and those who suffer genuine physical pain may double their misfortunes by apprehension. I have often had opportunity to compare, on the one hand, the life of the epileptic who proceeds about his business as if

an epileptic attack deserved no further consideration than a headache, with that, on the other hand, of the one in whose thoughts epilepsy occupies so prominent a place as practically to exclude all else. The difference in their general condition and in their efficiency, to say nothing of the difference in spirits, is so striking that one is forced to question whether more harm is not done by the worry than by the attack. And further, I believe there is no question that the attacks are less frequent among those who busy themselves with outside affairs than among those who focus the attention upon their disability.

"But," objects a querulous parent, "would you have my child take any chance of harm?"

Why not he as well as another?

We all take chances, and we let the children take chances, a thousand a day. The occasional harm is outweighed, in the mind of the sensible parent, by the net result. In the case of the epileptic the slightly increased chance of an attack occurring in a dangerous situation is more than offset by the imminent danger of his drifting into melancholy through narrowing his horizon to his own condition. Better play the game than bewail the handicap.

As regards the morbid fear of physical injury, perhaps the most potent cause, in the adult, is the too insistent desire to be perfectly safe. Similarly, a potent cause for the fear of ridicule, of censure, of harming others, of accepting responsibilities, and the like, arises from insistence to be immune from the calamities of our

kind. It is this which changes one from a social being into a "hatter," in other words, it is the "New England" conscience that doth make cowards of us all.

Recognition of this fact in its various bearings upon conduct sets us on the track of controlling, to some extent, at least, our fears; for the insistent thought is amenable to treatment by reason and by suggestion. Take, for example, the fear of passing through a tunnel. It is useless to remind one in whom this fear is fixed that there is practically little danger. He knows this already, and yet he fears. This constitutes his malady. It is only when he can bring himself to pass through the tunnel with tranquil mind, *although* it is dangerous, that he has conquered the unreasoning fear.

The line of thought by which the victim of tunnel-dread can bring himself to the point of tranquillity is something as follows: "If I give way to all these fears and avoid, one after another, all situations involving even minimal danger, I shall withdraw myself more and more from all that makes life worth living, shall finally, in fact, go into solitary confinement, and refuse to emerge for fear of some intangible ill.

"Worse yet, even there I shall be in constant misery for fear of earthquake, fire, thunderstorm, and the other dangers that do not respect the solitude of the chamber. Even though I may so arrange my life as to avoid such external dangers, like the man who constructed an underground cavern to which he resorted at the approach of every thunder

cloud, I shall not free myself from the fear of heart disease, of apoplexy, or of appendicitis. Over against the danger of this tunnel which I know is slight, I must set, then, the very real danger of a ruined life."

The next step is resolutely to concentrate the mind upon some other subject than the danger either of the tunnel or of anything else, and thus substitute an active thought for a morbid fear.

The mental depression accompanying fear constitutes mental pain, and is no easier to bear than physical pain. The only recourse for the sufferer is to try to regard it as an unavoidable handicap in the game of life, and to try to play the game in spite of it. The heavier the handicap (and no one who has not gone through an attack of this sort can

really appreciate its onus) the greater the credit of the successful player. The prayer of the mental sufferer should be, not "Remove this burden," but "Let me bear this burden." For the management of this abnormal mental state grim determination, not ridicule, is required. Ridicule is not only ineffective but exasperating. Intangible fears and foolish fussiness may be treated in lighter vein. If I think I cannot stand a certain odor, I can say to myself, "Thank the Lord I have a sense of smell"; if I am oppressed by a "feeling of goneness," I can thank my stars that "goneness" is not pain; and if I have pain I may congratulate myself *that I can feel;* but when the cloud of melancholy settles over the mental horizon such lighthearted methods are inadequate and out of

keeping. There is nothing to do on such a foggy morning but grab the dinnerpail, shoulder the tools, and join the procession with the mind on the work instead of on the weather.

This line of reasoning and resolve once entered upon, progress is rapid; the former coward will find himself seeking opportunities to try his new-found power over the very dangers he has hitherto sedulously avoided. He may finally find himself tranquilly accepting situations of actual danger.

To one unfamiliar with these fears I am doubtless writing in a foreign language, but he may rest assured that there are innumerable sufferers from these morbid states, doubtless more than one among his own acquaintance. On the other hand, some sufferer may read and say, "Recovery is impossible"; but I can assure

him that others have by such means arrested their drift toward mental invalidism. I remember particularly the case of one who so far conquered a phobia regarding heart disease, that when asked if he now realized that his heart was not diseased, answered, "Better yet, I don't care if it is." *Alpium alterum latus Italiæ est.*

I have recently seen a humorous sketch on the dentist as the savior of society. He alone, it would seem, stands between us and the annihilation that shall follow enervation. He alone takes the place of the rack and the red Indian to teach a pampered generation that pain is a necessity and that fortitude to bear it a desideratum. The moral of this article was as pertinent as the disposition of the *dramatis personæ* was amusing. We hear much more nowadays about

avoiding danger than we ought. It should not be regarded an unmixed evil that the dangers of travel, at least, have steadily increased until it requires some courage even to cross the street on a busy day.

Training-out or reasoning-out the fear of death will vary with one's view of death, but Marcus Aurelius [15] covered every contingency when he said:

"He who fears death either fears the loss of sensation or a different kind of sensation. But if thou shalt have no sensation neither wilt thou feel any harm; and if thou shalt acquire another kind of sensation, that thou wilt be a different kind of living being and thou wilt not cease to live." Or better, in the words of Socrates: "There can no evil befall

[15] Long's "Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius," viii, 58.

a good man, whether he be alive or dead."

To fear a thing of whose nature we know nothing is a waste of energy which might better be conserved to meet known conditions:

> Cowards die many times before their deaths.
> The valiant never taste of death but once.
> Of all the wonders that I ever heard,
> It seems most strange that men should fear.

X

VARIOUS OBSESSIONS

ALWAYS TO WIN; TO ACCEPT NO FAVORS; TO CARRY THROUGH

For it may be convenient sometimes, to put some restraints upon the very best intentions.—STANHOPE'S *Thomas à Kempis.*

Obsession was defined in "Why Worry" as *an unduly insistent and compulsive thought, habit of mind, or tendency to action.* The ground was taken that the obsession, coupled with morbid self-consciousness, lies at the foundation of most of the tribulations of the worrier. It seems worth while still further to illustrate its phases.

In the first place, there is the obsession always to succeed. While desire to excel is laudable, an insatiable

insistence always to surpass, a desire the thwarting of which causes such exhausting emotions as irritability, anger, despair, and depression, may fairly be termed undue.

This obsession is always indignantly disclaimed; its absurdity appeals, in the abstract, even to its possessor. Thus in the matter of games, a man may exhibit this insistence at each and every game, but if asked if he really expects or wishes to win every time, will say, "Of course not." I have heard a witness asked in court if he ever made a mistake; his answer was, "Of course." "Can you give an example?" the lawyer inquired. "No, I can't remember any," the witness replied.

At the end of a certain golf match one loser paced the floor impatiently ejaculating at frequent intervals,

"How *could* I have lost my nerve on that hole?" Another loser, seated at ease, remarked, "I was wondering how I could have kept *mine* so *long!*" There can be no question which of these players more profits by the exercise, and which is more immune from nervous exhaustion. This general proposition the fretter himself will allow, but the next time reason and obsession come in conflict odds may confidently be laid upon the latter. He who plays a game merely to win loses the best part of the game. He may acquire physical dexterity, but he is still neglecting an important feature of the contest, namely, opportunity to cultivate, for use on demand, such mental traits as judgment and self-control, to say nothing of the gentler virtues, generosity and the subjugation of the ego.

It is well if this obsession does not develop the desire to *win at any cost,* including the cost of one's fine sense of honor. The unlikelihood of this happening at golf is an advantage of that form of recreation. I have seen more than one embryo golf-player consciously or unconsciously neglect to count poor strokes, only to catch in time the spirit of the game and finally to penalize himself without assistance.

The obsession *never to be under an obligation* deserves a word. Even the "sponge" may be a less uncomfortable member of society than the person obsessed under no circumstances to accept a favor, and, as far as the effect on the individual is concerned, if an extreme be reached, the "sponge" has altogether the advantage. The insistence to be under no

obligation leads to many of the minor self-deceits to which the obsessive, in their effort to square their peculiar form of conscience, are prone. Even a child may feel and resent, without being able to analyze, this frame of mind on the part of his elders. Thus, after having done a few errands while his dinner is cooling, the child is often asked to do another "as long as he is up." Again, he is asked to "just slip down to the post-office," to "run over to the neighbor's and ask for the loan of a few eggs," a request in which the word *loan,* by the way, often involves still another self-deceit on the part of the parent obsessed to feel herself a non-recipient of favors. The child would do these things far more willingly if the form of request magnified instead of minimized the labor. But to cultivate such habit of con-

cession is beyond the power of the obsessive parent, even though she has acquired the position of mentor and example to the obsessive child.

The obsession *to brook no opposition* implies an undue degree of determination. The philosophy of Curlylocks in "Lewis Rand" has so well epitomized this obsession and its results, that further elaboration than the following quotation seems superfluous:

"I know—I know!" said Lewis. "Of course he's my father. But I never could stand for any one to get in my way!"

"That's just what the rattlesnake says—and after a while no one does get in his way. But he must be a lonely creature."

The obsession to make (or to have made in the past) *no mistake*

sometimes gives evidence of extreme selfishness and always reacts disastrously to the "nerves" of the self-centred possessor of the New England conscience. The insistence on the part of a parent to know if the illness of a child is due to any fault of hers sometimes so far overshadows her anxiety for the child as almost to suggest the query whether her affection for the child is unselfish. The hardest sacrifice for such a parent is that of her own self-approbation. Present conduct deserves more thought than past mistakes.

XI

VARIOUS OBSESSIONS—Continued

TO BE A MARTYR; ALWAYS TO BE RIGHT; TO SETTLE AFFAIRS

A discontented man is one who is falne out with the world, and will bee revenged on himselfe. Fortune has deny'd him in something and he now takes pet, and will be miserable in spite.—J. EARLE: *Micro-Cosmographie*, 1628.

INDULGENCE in the melancholy pleasure of martyrdom is a form of insistent desire which seems peculiarly difficult to dismiss, and yet it should be among the easiest. The craving of the obsessed to be miserable is a kind of intellectual and moral intoxication. To "suffer in silence," to be "misunderstood," not only in novels (in which it is made to appear a virtue) but in real life, affords to the self-centred a comfort

difficult for the healthy-minded to appreciate. If the ultimate object is to acquire sympathy, that object is less often attained than that of causing impatience. This attitude of mind carries with it an assumption that others can read our thoughts, and that, whatever our actions, others can, or should, know our motives. It implies, in short, an inability to take a broad view of life and a bird's-eye view of oneself.

The straightening of this morbid mental twist is one of the first signs of reform. If, on a windy night, the door leading to a sensitive young lady's apartment slams incessantly, she is wont to adopt, next morning, a tone of reproach which includes the entire family, even though another of the family may have closed the door lest it disturb her. To avail herself

of such commonplace relief, even from her own grievance, does not appeal to the voluntary martyr, but it would be well worth her while to make the effort. With regard to her oblivion for the troubles of others, Cowper's verses on the Sensitive-plant close with this almost too severe arraignment:

> If all the plants that can be found
> Embellishing the scene around,
> Should droop and wither where they grow,
> You would not feel at all—not you.
> The noblest minds their virtue prove
> By pity, sympathy, and love:
> These, these are feelings truly fine,
> And prove their owner half divine.

The obsession always to be right, always to have one's position clearly understood, and to have everything settled. The familiar expression, "I don't care, it wasn't my fault," is an unconscious acknowledgment of indifference to the interests of others

so automatic that its significance is easily overlooked. While the speaker would repudiate the idea that it was more than a thoughtless form of speech, it really implies an anxiety never to be at fault, or at least never to be thought at fault, that in many cases amounts to an obsession. Such a frame of mind may well cause worry. Would it not help establish a more comfortable and restful attitude to reason somewhat as follows: "Some one is at fault, why should I wish away the burden? Even if I am in fault why should I be miserable—can I expect always to be in the right? And even suppose I am in the right, but others think me in the wrong, others have been misunderstood, why should I be exempt? At all events, the question whether I am right or wrong is only of passing moment to

others, and if I wish to stand high in their opinion I can promote this end better by exhibiting an indifference to trifles, and a generally equable disposition, than by a fussy querulousness to prove that I am always right and others always wrong, or by rehearsing all the details of my position."

The exact shade of opinion held by any one individual upon a given question is, to others, generally of less importance than the question itself. Indeed it may well be that neither the question nor the opinion is a sufficiently vital matter to warrant anxious and continuous attention. The man who realizes this and proceeds quietly upon his way is the double gainer—he places himself on a higher plane in the estimation of others, and he conserves his own

peace of mind, postponing by so much the nervous collapse of which he stands in danger from an amount of work innocuous if pursued with freedom from anxiety over self-inflicted dilemma.

No one would deny the desirability of now and then "acknowledging the corn." To do this is good for the soul—it encourages humility and checks the mushroom-growth of self-conceit; incidentally it endears us to our fellow mortals. But notwithstanding these considerations some of us have never acknowledged a corn in our lives, but have always managed either to deny our intellectual or moral limp, or if that limp is too obvious for denial, to explain it on some basis less lowering to our pride.

In line with this obsession comes the insistence to make others aware of

our superior sensibilities. In a railway station the other day a sadly-intoxicated wretch, after making several ineffectual attempts to leave the bench upon which he had been sitting, fell to the ground. The manœuvre was greeted by shouts of laughter in which the majority of the onlookers joined. Among them was one, however, who, by word and expression, almost made himself obnoxious by manifesting his disgust that the observer should exhibit mirth instead of sorrow at the spectacle. His efforts in this direction illustrate a not uncommon attitude. I refer not to the sympathy, which I fear is likewise uncommon, but to its exploitation. This tendency results, I suppose, from what the phrenologist used to call the "bump of approbativeness," meaning a desire to stand well in the

opinion of others. But the method signally fails of that result. In point of fact, if we were to pick out, off hand, the most unpopular spectator on this occasion, we should have to begin with the censorious observer. Our possession of ideals a trifle above the average seems to carry with it compulsion to impress this fact on our environment. But this insistence on parading our sensibilities, like other obsessions, only serves to add to our ultimate nervous discomfiture, and no more endears us to our associates than if we boasted of our greater wealth or superior intellectual endowment.

A curious form of the obsession to settle things is that of the compulsion to *think* things through. A certain person tells me he dislikes to think of objects suspended in the air be-

cause he has to cut them down in his mind. But he is so afraid that he has thought them dropped before he has thought his way through the string that he has to repeat the process over and over again, sometimes becoming quite exhausted before the deed is accomplished to his satisfaction.

Closely allied to this form of obsession is the compulsion to set others right, a compulsion the disappointment of which causes much needless woe. Indeed this obsession is almost boundless in its scope, limited only, in fact, by the world's affairs. Thomas à Kempis says: "Think how unreasonable it is to expect you should make others in all particulars what you would have them to be; when you cannot so much as make yourself what you are sensible you ought to be."

The obsession to have everything settled promptly is prone to cause such focussing of attention upon one subject as to preclude effective work in other directions. The desire at once to "know the worst" may be carried too far. A little postponement will sometimes transform the worst into the best. Who would care to know his whole future life to-day? Then why not let a slice of it go for a day or two? This is a world of uncertainty, and if we must live in it we might as well learn to accommodate ourselves to the conditions.

In line with the obsession to settle everything comes the obsession to form an opinion on everything, an innocuous habit unless it lead to that continuous and rankling discussion which helps upset the "nerves," particularly if too freely indulged in the

home circle. The normal tendency to drop with youth all these insistencies, is thus quaintly expressed in the Biglow Papers:

"Jes so it wuz with me," sez I, "I swow,
When I wuz younger'n wut you see me now,—
Nothin' from Adam's fall to Huldy's bunnet,
Thet I warn't full-cocked with my jedgment on it;

But now I'm gittin' on in life, I find
It's a sight harder to make up my mind,—
Nor I don't often try to, when events
Will du it for me free of all expense."

XII

VARIOUS OBSESSIONS—Concluded

REGARDING THE BODY; REGARDING THE MIND; FOR POSTPONING HAPPINESS

Physical ills are the taxes laid upon this wretched life: some are taxed higher, and some lower, but all pay something. My philosophy teaches me to reflect how much higher, rather than how much lower, I might have been taxed.—*Chesterfield.*

"THE room was so hot and close I couldn't keep awake to save my life," explained the man who, the night before, for the same reason, *could not sleep.* My comment is not upon the inconsistency of these observations; notwithstanding the contradiction both may be true. But why did identical conditions cause wakefulness last night and somnolence to-day? Is the reason purely physical? Probably not. I do not mean that sleep has

no dependence on conditions, but that one's attitude may modify the conditions. If I judge sleep the needful complement of closeness, the thought is father to the deed, whereas reiteration of the converse proposition keeps me awake.

We spend altogether too much thought on the question, "How do you do." Not that the daily salutation conveys a guarantee of interest on the part of the questioner; in such case it might do him, at least, some good. In any event, when we bid *ourselves* good morning, at the risk of disconcertion we might venture the inquiry, "What are you accomplishing?"

The insistent frame of mind is nowhere more compulsive than when directed toward the health and the bodily sensations. Not long ago I

spent an hour trying to induce an introspective patient to change his attitude toward minor ills, his list of which was long. He heard me gravely through, and at the end said, "Yes, if I didn't have astigmatism I would be all right."

The following is part of a conversation I recently held with one thus obsessed:

"Horace Fletcher says he finds four and a half hours of sleep sufficient while he works."

"Yes, but my constitution is different from his; I feel depressed and anxious and generally done up if I do not have eight."

"How many did you have last night?"

"Eight and a half."

"Then what troubles you to-day?"

"I am worried because I feel sure

that having slept more than eight hours last night I shall sleep less than eight hours to-night!"

The chief complaint of a certain victim of "nerves" is inability to sleep as *continuously* as she would like. She remains in bed perhaps ten hours a night; the longer she remains the more broken is the sleep, though its total hours suffice. This complaint begins to partake of the obsession, and reminds one of Carlyle, who described waking at five o'clock as "torture." The best treatment for such a complaint would be to rise at six and go to work.

The mere desire for eight hours of steady sleep is not necessarily obsessive. No one can blame me for making a fetich of eight hours provided I have been taught that this is needful. But when such belief becomes so fixed that I feel stupid if I have ac-

complished only seven, it is time for psychotherapeutics.

Two French physicians[16] have coined the term *cenestopathy* to denote the state of mind which causes one to become absorbed by the recognition of the constant stream of sensations which arise from all parts of everyone's body, but which ordinarily pass unnoted. Once the attention is fixed on these sensations the very *absence of sensation* in a part causes alarm. One individual described by these writers says that his brain feels to him as though atrophied, flattened, like a sponge. "I can no longer feel my brain—it's like an emptiness." He thrusts out his tongue, bites and pinches himself, grimaces incessantly, and beats his head with his fist in a vain endeavor to arouse his lost feeling. The palate and nose are

[16] Journal of Abnormal Psychology, vol. iii, No. 3.

at the same time *insensible* and *painful*. He no longer feels the air passing through the respiratory tract. "I should be glad to have severe pain, such as I had formerly; then at least I was able to feel myself; now I no longer feel anything. It is horrible! It is like a great emptiness. I am tortured by a perpetual anguish."

A patient whose teeth were filled, some years ago, with a compound whose ingredients he remembers distinctly and with evident disapproval, still complains, or did when I last saw him, not only of general weakness dating from that time, but of the most anomalous sensations in the oral cavity, among which may be mentioned a bitter taste with an absence of taste, an increased moisture with a feeling of dryness in the spot formerly occupied by the offending molar. This combination seems fairly worthy of

the long French name, as does the complaint of another patient that it feels to him as if his food passed down outside his ribs.

"Keep your mind off your thoughts," said a bright young lady to her sister, the other day. This young lady does not need a course in psychotherapy. No mind is perfect, —there is no cause for alarm if it even occasionally slips a cog. In fact, the more delicate its adjustment, the more liable it is to do so. There is perhaps no event in the mind's history more harmless and yet more alarming to the self-observant than the peculiar feeling that the present is a reproduction of the past. The phenomenon is thus described by Coleridge:

Oft o'er my brain does that strong fancy roll
Which makes the present (while the flash doth last)
Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past,
Mixed with such feelings as perplex the soul,
Self-questioned in her sleep.

The following explanation seems quite reasonable. Every sound and every sight is received in its order by the lower brain-centres of hearing and vision, in which its recognition is rudimentary; the impression passes immediately to the higher centres, by which it is definitely recognized. This passage is ordinarily so instantaneous that the two stages go unnoted. But in case a momentary delay occurs, by the time the sound or sight reaches the upper consciousness, a dim impression occurs to us that we have heard the sound or seen the sight before. Now we have no measure of the intervening time, so that when each successive sound and sight reaches our higher consciousness we feel that we have gone through the experience before, how long before we do not know. Very many, perhaps the ma-

jority of high-strung individuals, have had this experience at least once in their lifetime, and no harm has ever come of it. It is simply a case of the mental machinery slipping a cog. It is worth while to be ready to view the next occurrence with interest rather than with alarm.

Here is another equally harmless illustration of mental cog-slipping, possibly allied to, but occurring much less frequently than the one just described. For a period varying from a few minutes to a quarter hour the mind seems to have lost its grasp of affairs; the routine duties are performed without trouble, but complicated effort seems impossible, and it is difficult to remember even familiar details of one's affairs. I have been more than once anxiously consulted for this symptom, and have followed

for years the careers of individuals who have described it, but nothing has occurred to justify foreboding. It is a pet conceit of mine that this disturbance is allied to the temporary blindness of the so-called "sick headache" or "blind headache," a symptom so well recognized as to cause no uneasiness. In other words, there is a temporary blur of consciousness. Upon the occurrence, then, of this blur, in place of frantic effort to use the mind, and in place of needless apprehension of apoplexy and allied ill, one should try to adopt the same attitude that he does toward the "sick headache," confidently remind himself of its innocuous and temporary nature, and give the brain a rest of which it stands, perhaps, in need.

It is not safe for any of us to wonder if our brain is working rightly or

to think of all the things that we must do with it. We must be satisfied if we can do the one thing that lies before us, and the only effective way to do that is to attack it with single mind.

We are all prone to the obsession for postponing happiness. The tale that ends with the wedding, after which the lives of all concerned are supposed to fall into grooves of perpetual bliss and calm content, is in line with the general tendency to assert that when we change our residence, recover from this illness, or save a certain amount of money, we shall be thoroughly happy. The anticipation of future comfort is not in itself an obsession, but the determination not to be happy until this pleasure is attained is surely too insistent. We may as well make up our minds

at once that the nearest approach to real content we are ever likely to attain will be by way of the *æquo animo*. The only happiness on which we can rely is what we here and now, in spite of adverse fate, are able to achieve.

XIII.

PHYSICAL HABITS

TOBACCO; ALCOHOL; CLOTHING; EXERCISE AND THE BATH; FRESH AIR; FOOD

——practice tolerance and self-restraint.—
Marcus Aurelius.

It has been remarked by observing patients that physicians are wont to be guided largely by their own personal experience when they essay to control the physical habits of others —indeed I have been told on good authority that their advice on other people's habits changes from time to time according as they modify their own. It has likewise been observed, I think with justice, that the counsel on these points of a non-medical but practical trainer is not lightly to be disregarded.

But whatever respect, or lack of respect, may be accorded neurological opinion on these points, sufficient curiosity regarding it has been expressed to justify its promulgation. I have been, in fact, so directly asked to state my position that I feel impelled to comply. Some of the questions I have already briefly considered in "Why Worry."

Tobacco.—I suppose that if any given user of tobacco (or any other poison) had never indulged the practice his efficiency would be on a higher plane than it is to-day, provided he did not take up some other habit equally injurious. Most of us are, however, sufficiently humble (or should I say sufficiently dulled by the poison?) to prefer our present intellectual, physical, and social status to whatever ideal, without the weed,

our imaginations may picture. I shall, therefore, instead of counselling the smoker to taboo the habit, and to present his physician with whatever stock he has on hand, content myself with such features of tobacco-poisoning as are called to the attention of the neurologist, and give such advice as neurological experience seems to justify.

There is a general impression that the habitual use of tobacco immunizes the user, so that he can smoke more and more as time goes on. This is not, according to my observation, true, beyond a certain point and a certain time, the time and point varying in different individuals. The man who smokes eight cigars of a certain size and quality at forty and imagines he can smoke sixteen of the same at sixty is doomed to disappointment;

on the contrary it is much more likely that already at fifty his limit is halved instead of doubled, if, indeed, a thumping heart or lessening desire has not caused him to reduce still further his allowance in number, strength, or both. This consideration should lead one to keep well within his limit in early life and thus avoid tobacco saturation.

My observation of the disturbances resulting from excessive use of tobacco has led me to conclude that cessation of chewing is at least as imperative as that of smoking. If I found it necessary in a given case to advise the omission of only one of these habits it would be that of chewing. In point of fact, tobacco saturation demands absolute cessation, for at least some months, of both. When a bucket is full of water a single drop

may cause an overflow, and if evaporation is to be awaited it is well to postpone that drop for quite a time.

It is wrong to resort to the "dry smoke"; this habit, which is not at all dry, is too closely allied to chewing. The same observation applies to the habit of holding the cigar in the mouth between whiffs instead of in the hand.

The domestic cigar, in my opinion, may be continued longer by the susceptible than the "fragrant Havana." A light wrapper does not always cover a mild filling, nor is the Spanish "claro" to be too blindly followed in estimating the effect of a cigar upon the nervous system.

If one finds he must halve his tobacco it will not be safe to substitute three "invincibles" for six "bouquets." The habit of "chain smok-

ing" is to be discouraged. It is the gratification of a dangerous obsession. After finishing one cigar a definite interval should be allowed for the comparative passage of its effects—their permanent passage requires a longer interval than the "chain smoker" is likely under any circumstance to accord. In lessening the amount of tobacco it is well to form the habit of smoking a half-cigar instead of lessening the number of cigars smoked through. If one thus ignores the insistence to complete what he has begun, after the cigar is thrown away the only difference he will notice is a glow of pride. This is the easiest way I know to halve the amount of tobacco absorbed, not to mention the fact that one disposes, I think, of the worse half.

The injurious effect of cigarette

smoking consists, I believe, in the frequent repetition of the smoke and consequent lack of free intervals (and in the inhaling of the smoke) rather than in any peculiarly toxic effect of the cigarette.

Alcohol.—Careful and repeated experiments [17] seem to have established four facts regarding this drug. (1) Even moderate doses diminish the reaction time and the working efficiency, although the individual himself realizes no effect from the alcohol, and though he thinks that his work is at least as effective as without it. (2) The habitual use of alcohol does not modify this result of the single dose. (3) Its total effect is rather depressing than stimulating. (4) The effects of the single dose per-

[17] For a résumé of these experiments, see article by Dr. H. S. Williams, in *McClure's*, December, 1908.

sist longer than is generally supposed —thus the psychological effects of two litres of beer drunk in one day were found by experiment to have disappeared only on the third day, though there was no obvious sign of intoxication present. The logical sequence of these observations is that however effective may be the work of the habitual user of alcohol, it would be more effective if he abstained, and however good his nervous control may be, it would be better without the habit, assuming that no other equally injurious habit were substituted.

The question whether this effect is sufficiently offset by the social, business, or other advantages to make its moderate use on the whole desirable is one for the individual to decide, just as he decides whether the beef-

steak-smothered-in-onions of to-day is worth the price of the gustatory reminder of to-morrow. But such questions should be decided with the eyes open. In deciding them, the social and business advantages of becoming a "solitary" drinker need not be given much weight. Nor should it be assumed that either social or business interests demand that one form the habit of consuming under all circumstances a certain amount of alcohol daily.

These are the considerations that should guide one in the regulation of his consumption of alcohol, and upon these considerations I base my opinion, that if one would effectively conserve his cerebral activity and keep his "nerves" at their best, he will be wise to avoid becoming a "steady" consumer, even in moderate quantity.

I have carefully limited myself to discussion of questions germane to the province of the neurologist, but it may fall within that province to observe that it is as important to cultivate control as to limit individual habits. The nervous and mental makeup that leads to excessive use of alcohol is the same that, unless controlled, leads to over-indulgence in cocaine, opium, or other drug, sometimes to the cultivation of other undesirable habits, including, for example, that of becoming idle and disorderly, "or otherwise obnoxious, whether or not under the influence of alcohol."

Clothing.—The only suggestion I have to offer on this point is this: Although, in this country, the houses are built of material practically impervious to air, and are kept, as a

rule, at a uniformly high temperature, the average male inhabitant wears, in winter, clothing fitted for a house in which the room temperature is not over sixty degrees, and the halls much colder. This is doubtless a mistake, the rectification of which would not only lead to comfort but lessen "colds" by avoiding the susceptibility which follows excessive heat. If one wears thinner and less clothing in-doors, he will find that, except for the cold ride, he may discard the ulster for an overcoat of moderate weight. Of course he must first dismiss the insistent desire to feel continuously a certain warmth, a subject I have discussed at length in "Why Worry."

Exercise and the Bath.—I am a firm believer in the brief morning plunge for most people, in cool water,

followed by a thorough and prolonged use of two towels of liberal dimensions and rude texture—the first to remove the moisture, the second for the dry rub. I do not care for the dry rub with a wet towel. After exercise the ideal bath is the hot shower followed by the cold. These baths should be taken while the body is warm, not after "cooling off." If the shower after exercise is inaccessible I prefer the dry rub and postponement of the bath.

The average person would do well to spend at least two hours daily in the open air, and accomplish at least the equivalent of a two-mile walk in the open. The middle-aged and elderly person is apt to ignore exercise altogether. Even the athletic student, once launched upon his business or professional career, too fre-

quently limits his gymnastics to such movements as walking from the electric to his office, taking his seat at the desk, and the like. If that career is sufficiently successful to warrant gastric indulgence he attains at forty proportions he would fain exchange. It is not even then too late to take up gymnastics and to practise gustatory forbearance, but the best way is to continue moderate exercise, combined with moderate replenishment of the worn-out tissues, from the time of leaving college.

The American obsession for "the whole thing" is more to blame, I fancy, than the individual, for neglect to follow this reasonable plan, but when a middle-aged six-footer protests that if he can't play eighteen holes he won't play one, it sounds to me like the grown-up equivalent for

something like this: "If I can't play my way, I'll take my tea-set and go home."

I was consulted not long ago by a young lady who had changed her habitat to the city, and now took no exercise at all. My suggestion that she occasionally "walk round the block" was received with little favor, because her former limit was five miles.

When confined to bed for some weeks with a trouble not affecting the general condition I found most useful the suggestion of my colleague, Dr. Sherman, that I exercise daily in the recumbent position. I found that many of the ordinary gymnastic movements were practicable, and that others could be easily replaced. Particularly noticeable was the prompt disappearance of the lame

back after a few days of twisting and bending. Nor was it needful to delay the convalescence by having to learn to walk over again.

In choosing among the more vigorous forms of exercise, due consideration should be paid to the time of life. While avoiding molly-coddling, I should practically taboo baseball and football after thirty-five, and be sure of my circulatory apparatus before I took up tennis at fifty, but should swing the golf club as long as I could keep my place on the links. I advise young men to remember this and not to spend all their recreation-time gaining facility in the sports they are bound to discontinue with advancing years, but to devote some practice to the less strenuous sports.

It is true that the muscles increase in size and strength with exercise,

but it is also true that when muscles are *too* continuously exercised (particularly upon the same movement) they rebel by pain, finally by wasting. It must also be remembered that the heart is not exempt. I was once consulted by a gentleman of fifty years whose joy in life was exercise. On finding his powers for violent exercise were waning he had redoubled his efforts; he had been jumping fences and running no end of miles notwithstanding increasing inability. When I saw him he was reduced literally to a skeleton, with an enormously dilated heart, and was hardly able to cross the street for lack of breath and strength. This was a very exceptional case, and need not frighten the hypochondriac who feels a flutter of the heart or a vague pain now and then, but it may serve to

deter some overzealous athlete who ignores all limitations.

Fresh Air.—Most of us get too little fresh air. We recognize its value in the abstract, but fail to take advantage in the concrete of such whiffs as are within our reach. Here again, the obsession for "the whole thing" handicaps us. We would we were in the country or the woods where all the air (out-of-doors) is fresh, but we fail, when in the fresh air, to take a deep breath except when it is done for us by an involuntary yawn. "If I only had an automobile I would ride out every day," is no excuse for not taking an open-car ride out of the city when time and occasion serve. The streets of the city are full of germ-bearing dust, it is true, but this is insufficient ground for staying always in the house, a habit far less

hygienic than getting the benefit of even such air as is found on the street. There are places in every city kept open for use of the public, unpatronized by those to whom they are the most accessible. It is as important to question, "Have I had any fresh air to-day?" as it is to ask if I have had three square meals. I think, indeed, much more so.

Most nervous or other invalids confined to the house would do well to sit, properly protected, by the open window for a certain time every day, no matter how cold the weather. Colds are not caught in this way, but "impure air breathed in crowded rooms or vehicles, or in stuffy, ill-ventilated sitting-rooms or bedrooms, is a distinct cause of nasal and throat congestions." Exposure to the air is in itself, really, rather a preventive than a provocative of colds. In fact

the ideal environment for immunity from colds is, by all accounts, the outdoor air in latitudes far north of us, and where the mercury falls to points the mere thought of which drives us to the fireplace.

Food.—The food should be varied and moderate in quantity. Loading the stove spoils the grate and does not always make a better fire. Do not too readily discard a food because it has seemed to disagree. A large piece of mince pie after a full meal is a different thing from a small piece after a moderate meal, and as for two pieces, there should be no second piece. It is generally safe to defer the "second helping" to another meal. If we knew the exact point at which a meal could be ended to advantage, we should doubtless be surprised. One should never indulge to the point of repletion.

Almost any food likely to be offered can be eaten *in small quantity* by almost anybody. Cultivate salads, coarse bread, and fruits. If in fear of corpulence, do not imagine that leaving off butter, because it is fat, will make you thin, and that you can eat beefsteak by the pound because it is not fat. Nor should one be deluded into the belief that exercise will reduce his figure if the food is increased with the exercise.

Water should be freely used; at least three pints of fluid should be taken daily. Dana's expression "desiccated nerves" may serve as a gentle reminder. Water may be used both at and between meals, but it is probably better not to "gulp" it down in large quantities at a time, especially at meals. Cold water without ice is preferable to ice water.

We eat too much meat. Some seem

to think there is nothing left, but already among the "staple products" there are the standard vegetables, cereals, rice, eggs, fish, milk, bread and butter, fruit, griddle cakes, cheese, and nuts, surely enough to prevent starvation and capable of as great variety as the chop, the steak, and the roast.

Though I am well aware that there are real as well as apparent exceptions to all rules, I find it is difficult to fortify the belief some seem to hold that the average person may eat to repletion without gaining flesh, and that abstinence will not reduce rotundity. If another animal than man is to be fattened it is stuffed, and if man were otherwise constructed why has no one challenged this familiar figure of speech:

> On what hath this our Cæsar fed
> That he hath grown so great?

XIV

CONTROL

You have the lesson of the mid-years of life yet to learn—to be of all thought the despot. Never is man his own master till, like the centurion with his soldiers, he can say to joy come and to grief or anger or anxiety go, and be obeyed of these.—S. Weir Mitchell: From *The Red City*.

"It is easier to give way to the emotions than to master them," a colleague of mine is wont to remind the nervous sufferer.

The object of this axiomatic observation is to set one thinking whether he is really making the most of his talents when he is merely following the line of least resistance like, let us say, the jelly-fish. The more highly organized the nervous equipment, the greater the danger that its development will take the di-

rection of intensifying the emotions rather than of increasing the power to govern them.

And yet it is in this class that we find the so-called "strong-willed" people. On studying this variety of will-power we are likely to find an individual, who has not enough self-control to leave a mosquito bite alone, having what he wants at all costs, never again speaking to those who have displeased him, and wrecking the peace of a family rather than incur an obligation. Does this individual really lack the will-power to resist these aversions, desires, and obsessions? Generally no, he lacks rather the genuine desire. Desire to get well is there, at least the patient so protests, but not the desire to make the necessary change of attitude, even by way of an experiment.

Even the substitution of self-willed for strong-willed does not quite fit the case,—for to be ruled by the emotions, desires, and obsessions is rather to exercise no will at all.

The academic absence of free will excuses no one from this effort; no one doubts, I suppose, that we can gain more or less mastery over our emotions, that we can modify our habits, and that we can overcome obsessions. It may not be an exercise of free will in the academic sense if some reader is influenced by these pages to modify a faulty mental habit. I am less interested in the scientific designation of the process than I am in its accomplishment.

In the effort to attain this training, inability to take a bird's-eye view of our own affairs offers a serious obstacle. This obstacle sometimes

seems, indeed, almost insuperable. A certain individual had not spoken to an acquaintance of his since he had been greatly offended by him. On appealing to another for sympathy he was reminded of Epictetus's advice that we seize such opportunities to practice equipoise and that we regard such uncomfortable people as useful adversaries in the game of self-control.

"You do not appreciate the situation," was the reply, *"He did it on purpose!"*

It is not, after all, so hard to change either a physical or a mental habit if one will devote to it the necessary attention. It is a useful exercise to try changing *indifferent* habits from time to time just to acquire facility in the process in case occasion offers to break bad ones. Thus, sup-

pose one has always parted his hair on the left side, and has formed the habit of running his fingers through the hair on the right. Let him try parting it on the right side for a time and see how long before he will automatically use the left hand instead of the right. If he continue the experiment by repeated changes from side to side he will find the time required for forming the new habit gradually lessening. Such practice will increase his facility for making more important changes of habit. If, for example, it occurs to him to discard altogether the habit of using Nature's comb, he will be surprised to find how soon he can overcome the obsession to give way to this form of "character-leakage."

In trying such experiments one is likely to find himself at the end of a

week correcting faulty habits in his dreams. In other words, a week's practice can establish a habit in the so-called subconscious level.

Such practice upon physical habits will facilitate the change in mental habits. One may begin with the easily preventable habit of using ejaculatory expressions, and ascend to controlling the emotions which call forth these expressions. When this point is reached the danger of nervous collapse is indefinitely postponed, even in those by Nature bodily feeble and nervously ill-balanced. Strong is the lure of the static spark and the vibrator, but more potent for promoting self-control and establishing nervous poise are such simple, commonplace, and every-day methods as I have indicated. In estimating progress, most of us will find it less

depressing to measure from the starting-point than from the goal.

One can no more impart to another the habit of self-control than he can convey to him the title to play the violin. It is practice that is needed, and as regards the best time to begin the practice, Ben Franklin says: "He that resolves to mend to-morrow resolves not to mend now."

The question of teaching children to subdue the ego and in general to practice self-control is peculiarly difficult in the home. The example and suggestion of an outsider may outweigh years of parental admonition; this is one of the advantages of trusting much to carefully selected outside guidance. I have only a suggestion or two to make regarding the management of other people's children.

I shall not attempt to compare the

merits of the rod-of-iron with the rôle-of-love, or the rule-of-thumb with the method flexible. My pedagogic experience has been limited to medical students and nervous people. The relation of instructor to student and of physician to patient differs materially from that of teacher (or parent) to child, but I cannot doubt that the fundamental principles are as applicable to one as to the other. I have learned, for example, (1) that temporary subterfuges for special ends do not pay; (2) that sarcasm and personal ridicule retard instead of furthering instruction; (3) that the straightforward way is the best; (4) that the instructor gains nothing by assuming infallibility, and loses nothing by letting the student know that he is studying, too, and similarly that the neurologist loses none of the

patient's confidence by allowing that he has not perfected his own training against faulty mental and nervous habits; and (5) that it is better, as well as more honest, to abandon an indefensible position, even though dislodged by a student or an old woman, than to fortify oneself with fallacious arguments. Such simple principles surely apply without material modification to children.

I am no stickler for the abolishment of fairy tales and Santa Claus. For Kenneth Grahame's rector who believed that bison were afield and helped lay plans to trap them[18] I have nothing but affectionate respect. But when a child "really wants to know" things that he should know, how can he ever learn unless he is told, and told correctly. His progress

[18] The Golden Age.

is doubly difficult if at every turn he must inquire if the information is "really," "honest and true," and "hope to die" authentic. From many of my elders I found it difficult to extract a serious reply to questions which they deemed, without taking the trouble to find out, beyond my understanding. On the other hand I was credibly assured, and half believed, that hydrophobia was rampant, that bees were looking for the spot in the back of my neck through which their sting was fatal, and that every peddler's pack was full of naughty children.

It is true, I think, that elders of the present generation have turned over, on the whole, a new leaf, but just as we still hear "baby talk" we still find parents under-estimating the youthful intelligence and willingness to

learn. I have seen a child who was supposed by his mother to be hardly beyond the spanking age, voluntarily relinquish certain "habit movements" after the physician's serious explanation of their trend and their control.

Then there is the matter of acknowledging oneself a student. Take the question of the intelligent but insistent child who will not eat carrots and whose only reason up to date for eating them is a corresponding insistence on the part of his parent. All else having failed, why not explain to the child the real reason why he'd best eat them, acknowledge the affair not vital, acknowledge also that over-insistence is as faulty a mental habit on the part of the parent as on that of the child, and propose some such game as this: Every time the

parent refrains from saying carrot, or looking carrot, when there are carrots on the table, the parent scores, and every time the child eats a half inch of carrot the child scores. It would not surprise me to hear that if the parent scored the child did too. And if he doesn't it is not a killing matter.

XV

BROADENING THE HORIZON

The dull man is made, not by the nature, but by the immersion in a single business, and all the more if that be sedentary, uneventful, and ingloriously safe. More than half of him will remain unexercised and undeveloped; the rest will be distended and deformed by overnutrition, overcerebration, and the heat of rooms.—STEVENSON: *The Wrecker.*

"WHY, that is near where the Merrimac rises, behind Warren Daniels' barn!" observed a colleague of mine, on taking the address of a patient from New Hampshire. If this made half as much impression on the patient as it did on me, and I think it did, it was a bit of information well worth acquiring and retaining.

Even as concerns material success, it is not safe to assume that every variety of moss-gathering is a business asset. The man who has seen some-

thing of the world besides the four walls of his office, and who is familiar with a few affairs outside his business, is quite as likely to succeed in that office as the one who has not.

This consideration may have some weight with the "practical" business or professional man who deems himself one of those gifted individuals whose bodies do not resent continuous toil, whose eyes never tire from focussing on one object, and whose brains do not "go stale" though concentrated indefinitely upon one line of thought.

When in doubt about a journey it is well to ask ourselves whether we have ever taken a trip that we afterwards regretted, even though it was not, at the time, particularly enjoyable, and whether it irks us to have added something, even an unimportant geo-

graphical item, to our knowledge of the world.

But increasing the geographical knowledge is not the only kind of horizon-broadening that promotes, incidentally, our material welfare, and, directly, our mental training and mental strength by preventing us from "going stale." There is no branch of history, or art, no knowledge of material or applied science that will come amiss in this pursuit; the more directions in which we probe the more our interest broadens.

Some acquire with avidity such learning as is to be obtained in the schools, only to lapse, upon graduation therefrom, into a smug content with present knowledge. This reminds us of the child who was asked whether he would prefer a toy or a book. "A toy," he replied, "I've got a book."

It is not unusual to hear a man say, "I never go to the theatre: I never read novels," and even sometimes, "I never read the papers." These observations are generally made with an air which implies that incrustation is a virtue. When we hear such a remark it is generally fair to assume that the speaker's interests and experiences fall within too narrow boundaries. Every one is interested to read, or see portrayed, events with which he is familiar. The man who attends the ball game is eager to read next morning that "In the fourth the Doves strolled in with their runs. Beck fanned. Dahlen walked. Sweeney walked. Graham singled," though these manœuvres are to him already ancient history. The news that the President "foozled a putt after a phenomenal drive" means more to the man who saw it

than to the one who did not. To the man who has never played golf it means less than nothing at all.

If the autumn flora of Virginia are uninteresting and unfamiliar to the reader, what pleasure is lost in the introductory pages of "Lewis Rand."

"Golden-rod and Farewell-Summer and the red plumes of the sumac lined his path, while far overhead the hickories and maples reared a fretted gold-red roof. Underfoot were moss and colored leaves, and to the right and left the squirrels watched him with bright eyes. He found the stream where it rippled between banks of fern and mint. As he knelt to fill the pail the red-haw and the purple iron-weed met above his head."

For my own part I was so fascinated by this author's description, in

"Audrey," of the woods and banks of Virginia in early May, that I took at this time a week's vacation and included a visit to the house in which she wrote the book just to see what she described—and I was not disappointed. Besides the masses of yellow and red I remember particularly the dainty blossoms of the flowering dogwood scattered through the woods along the railway track. But the New Englander need not go so far afield at this time of year (or a week or two later), to see the equally dainty shadbush bloom, similarly setting forth such open woods as are not given over to the pictured charms of face powder and horse liniment, the rustless screen, and the dollar watch!

What pleasure is missed by the reader of the Biglow Papers if he does not know the spring flowers:

Half-vent'rin liverworts in furry coats,
Bloodroots, whose rolled-up leaves ef you oncurl,
Each on' em's cradle to a baby-pearl,—
But these are jes' Spring's pickets, sure as sin
The rebble frosts'll try to drive 'em in.

There is pleasure in store for the busy man who awakens to the realization that

Beauties he lately slighted as he passed [19]
Seem all created since he travelled last,

even though he may never care to know whether the radicle is superior or the micropyle adjacent to the hilum! And if he feels the impulse to stir the dust on his Gray and his Chambers to the extent of discovering that the vine in his own doorway was named by the friend of Anthony and Cleopatra, he is broadening his horizon as well as his neighbor who has plucked an ivy-leaf from the grave of Abelard and Heloise without

[19] Cowper.

pausing to inquire just who those worthies were.

One totally unfamiliar with history may surely take small delight in reading, since every reference is to him a foreign language.

A month's study of "Astronomy with an Opera Glass" (Serviss) will not only lure one out of doors some of these long evenings, but lend live interest to many a reference, hitherto skipped in the reading, from the 18th Chapter of Job down to Ironquill's vivid picture:

When the Northern Crown and Hydra stand transfigured in the Twilight,
When Orion's blazing girdle gleams with hues of gold and lilacs,
And round the pole careening whirls the phantom Arcto-phylax.

It is not always wise to wait for the spirit to move. Interest in one's own business is promoted by the necessity of its pursuit, but other interests have

to be, at the outset, forced. I am told that the secretary of a certain botanical society first took up quite perfunctorily the study in which he now delights.

There is still another direction in which it especially behooves the self-centred to broaden the horizon, namely, in his view of life and his own place in it. Many of us are so susceptible to the comment of others that we wear ourselves out with efforts to please, and allow unfavorable comment to bring us to the verge of prostration. But if we can drop our self-analysis and forget our troubles long enough to take note of other people, we shall shortly realize that some are going to flatter us a bit, to praise our efforts and condone our faults; such is their agreeable habit of mind; others are going to be

"frank," are going to point out to us, as a friend, and because that is what they would that we should do to them, what an ass we are making of ourselves all the time; this is their breath of life. It really has nothing to do with us. Between these extremes we shall meet with every grade of stimulus to our vanity and to our despair, this middle class including quite a number who are not going to think of our affairs at all, but rather of their own. If, now, we value peace of mind, we shall resolve beforehand neither to be exalted by the one, nor discouraged by the other, nor yet offended by the third. This resolve implies complete readjustment of our worldly relations and abnegation of our *amour propre,* but "Why boggle at the cross that leads directly to a crown?" [20]

[20] Stanhope's "Thomas à Kempis."

All this sounds easy, but if we can do it we have made ourselves better than he that taketh a city. The practical adaptation to actual experiences of the most obvious philosophic principles calls for all that there is in us.

It is well if we can sufficiently broaden our horizon to see ourselves. A physician was consulted not long ago by a patient who attributed his nervous break-down to marital infelicity. He had married hastily, he said, because he was driven by loneliness to the verge of suicide; too late he realized his mistake. After receiving the appropriate advice and consolation, the patient asked whether the physician were married. On receiving a negative reply he said, "Then it is easy for you to philosophize for you don't know what trouble is." It was only after being

reminded of his prior suicidal frame of mind that he acknowledged his tendency to discontent inherent.

> The man who sighs for the bygone day
> When a barefoot boy he ran,
> Is the same old boy who used to say:
> "Gee! I wish I was a man!"
>
> —*Chicago News.*

Our state of mind, while by no means uninfluenced by circumstances, depends far more on our make-up and our training than on any circumstance whatsoever. One may be miserable in comfort, another happy in discomfort, just as one may unconcernedly cross a narrow plank on a 20-story building while another cannot cross an open square, but must have the railing within easy reach, lest some calamity which he cannot name shall overtake him. We cannot always regulate environment, but we can always regulate our attitude

toward environment. Emerson[21] says: "A political victory, the recovery of your sick or the return of your absent friend or some other quite external event raises your spirits, and you think good things are preparing for you. Do not believe it. It can never be so. Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles."

We were taught many things as children, only to drop them on graduation along with our algebra. One was to broaden our horizon to the extent of putting ourselves in the other fellow's place. People who are in the habit of being waited on are peculiarly prone to under-estimate the details of the process. We have ordered, for example, a breakfast of an

[21] Self-Reliance.

orange, a boiled egg, and a cup of coffee. Three minutes have passed and it is not yet served; we fume—a simple meal like that should have been ready long ago. Now is a good time for us to count the number of articles the waiter must handle to properly serve this meal (for I am assuming that we are not at a lunch counter). We are surprised to find the total at least twenty-five, and our indignation gives way to surprise that it is served before we complete the count.

The present tendency in favor of "work-cure" not only serves its essential end of substituting external interest for self-study, and action for reflection; but it also helps a little to broaden the horizon regarding things. In some sanatoria the old-time methods of treatment have been sup-

planted, or replaced, by the study of carpentry, carving, weaving, basket-making, and the like; sometimes by bird-study, flower-study, and other studies of less practical but of more varied interest. The result of the work is generally regarded of less importance than the work itself, though Dr. Hall, of Marblehead, favors work upon articles of material value, thereby improving the patient's financial condition. In the résumé of the subject presented to the American Medical Association by Dr. Thayer, of Portland, regarding externalizing the interests of the nervous patient, Dr. Blumer, who introduced the work-cure at the Butler Hospital twenty years ago, is quoted as saying that "improvement seems to date from the first time the patient enters a shop or workroom." La Rochefoucauld says:

"Le travail de corps délivre des peines de l'esprit, et c'est ce qui rend les pauvres heureux."

The self-centred "neurasthenic" not only tends to narrow his horizon, but to take it with him when forced to a change of base. I know of a lady who declines to go to the sanitarium unless she may take her own piano and her own library. Almost any patient sufficiently prostrated to require sanitarium treatment may be expected to complain that the noises, sights, and general environment of the establishment defeat her cure. She has to be reminded that learning to endure these things is part of the treatment. To quote from the Philistine:

"I cannot lighten your burden and perhaps I should not, even if I could, for men grow strong through bearing burdens. If I can, I will show you

how to acquire strength to meet all your difficulties, and face the burdens of the day."

The sensitive person is often deterred by fear of ridicule and unfavorable comment from extending his interests and occupations beyond the accustomed channels. But he must remember that when the full milk-can "slops over" the empty ones are bound to rattle. It may be a little egotistic thus to class himself, especially when his ventures into new fields prove unsuccessful, but it is a kind of egotism far less disastrous to his own peace of mind, and no more obnoxious to others, than the egotism he expresses by quitting the stage lest the limelight fall his way.

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